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THE PRACTICES
OF THE
EARLY CHRISTIANS CONSIDERED:

COMPRISING,

- I.—AN EXHIBITION OF THE FIRST CHURCHES. BY H. GREW HARTFORD, U. S.
II.—NOTES CONTAINING OBJECTIONS TO SOME OF MR. GREW'S STATEMENTS.
III.—LETTERS ON BAPTISM, CONTAINING STRICTURES ON THE NOTES.

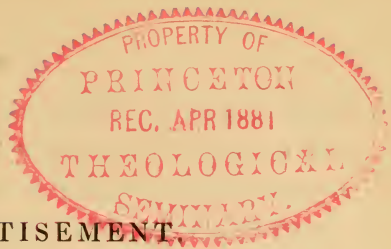
BY HENRY BANNERMAN.

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ADVERTISEMENT

OF the three small works, by different writers, that compose the present volume, the first is a reprint—the others appear for the first time. Their publication in a connected form had its origin in the following circumstance : A few months ago, a copy of the first English Edition of the American Treatise was put into the writer's hands, having manuscript notes appended, containing objections to some of the views advocated, relating chiefly to the subject of baptism. Having been asked to give his opinion of the validity of these objections, he complied with the request in a series of Letters addressed to a friend. When these Letters were completed, being urged to publish them, together with the Notes mentioned and the Treatise itself, he was the more readily induced to adopt the suggestion, as the latter seemed well calculated to excite attention to *the order* of the first churches ; a subject which has hitherto in this country been much overlooked. In America, it is well known, the religious communities who act on the principles stated in the ensuing pages, form a very considerable body ; and their number seems rapidly increasing. There is reason to fear, indeed, that several of these American churches have imbibed some doctrinal views of a very questionable nature and tendency ; but with such views, the principles

in question have no necessary connexion. In reprinting this small work, the Editor has felt it to be his duty to omit several passages which he regards as exceptionable; nor does he consider himself pledged to every sentiment or expression that has been retained: though as a whole, it contains, in his view, a summary of social duty meriting careful consideration. In the compass of a few pages, will be found a rule of directory for the social worship and practices of Christians, taken wholly from Scripture, which every one can easily compare for himself, with the sole attested standard of obedience. It may be proper to mention, that the Notes were written without a view to publication; and that the Editor alone is responsible for their appearance in their present form.

As the Letters on Baptism were also designed, in the first instance, to be a private communication, the reader will not expect to find the subject discussed with the order and fulness of a formal treatise. They have been extended, indeed, to a length very disproportionate to the Notes that occasioned them; but it will be perceived, that the writer's object was to furnish his correspondent with a sketch of the leading points in debate on this long litigated question; and in the execution of this purpose, the Notes served as a convenient text book. It is hoped accordingly, that the statements and arguments adduced will, for the most part, be found applicable to the defences of paedobaptism usually found in popular treatises, not less than to the objections, to which the strictures more immediately relate. It being thought advisable to dwell at some

length on the analogical reasoning from the rite of circumcision, on account of this being regarded by many pædobaptists as their main argument, the views of one or two other writers on this point have been noticed ; but with this exception, the course pointed out in the Notes has been very closely followed.

In prosecuting the discussion, the writer has been actuated, he trusts, by higher motives than a love of controversy ; for though he has had occasion, in numerous instances, to expose and refute *error*, this has been attempted throughout, with a view *to establish truth*. His leading aim has been, to set forth in a clear and convincing light, some of the Scriptural evidence that so abundantly exists, of immersion into the faith of the gospel being the bounden and exclusive duty of Christian believers. How far he shall have succeeded in conveying to the minds of others, the convictions he feels so overpowering on his own, it is for those who may honour the following pages with a perusal, to judge ; but with all who feel disposed to weigh the arguments adduced fairly,—with a sincere desire to learn on which side truth really is, he has difficulty in conceiving of any other than one result. On the minds of those, who, from various causes, may have conceived a violent prejudice against the conclusions advocated ; or who, from having publicly committed themselves in opposition to them, are in a manner predetermined (unconsciously it may be) to disregard all evidence however clear, which would convict them of error ; it would betray great ignorance of human

nature to anticipate any effect being produced. Nor is there much probability of conviction reaching the minds of the superficial and listless ; a class of readers, not less numerous now, there is reason to think, than they were upwards of a century ago, when they were so forcibly reprov'd by Bishop Butler. ' Though it is scarce possible,' he says, in the preface to his celebrated *Rolls Sermons*, ' to avoid judging, in some way or other, of almost every thing which offers itself to one's thoughts ; yet it is certain that many persons, from different causes, never exercise their judgment upon what comes before them, in the way of determining *whether it be conclusive and holds*. They are, perhaps, entertained with some things, not so with others ; they like and dislike. But whether that which is proposed to be made out, be really made out or not ; whether a matter be stated according to the real truth of the case, seems to the generality of people, merely a circumstance of no consideration at all. Arguments are often wanted for some accidental purpose. But proof as such, is what they never want for themselves ; for their own satisfaction of mind or conduct in life.' It is obvious that on readers of this careless description, the most conclusive reasoning must, for the most part, be thrown away.

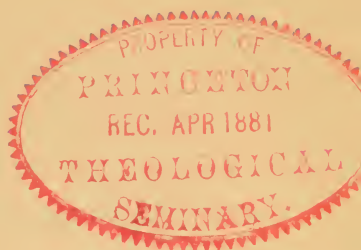
But, in addition to a ' real curiosity to see what is true,' which this eminent writer, here and in the context, so emphatically enforces, it is requisite to our judging justly, that we should read, not so much with a view to detect error and confute, as with a sincere intention of carefully weighing the argu-

ments advanced, that we may estimate *with accuracy* their true force. To the successful pursuit of truth, in short, there must, in every case, be cherished a love of truth for its own sake, and an honest determination to follow it, at all hazards; for without the guidance of these principles, there can be no protection from those self-deceiving influences, to which every one is more or less exposed. ‘It appears to me,’ to use the impressive words of another distinguished prelate, ‘that *it is not given* to men even of the most acute intellect, to discover that honesty is the best policy, till they shall have adopted the honest course for its own sake, and not from motives of policy. But those who shall have disdained all politic disguise, suppression of truth, and connivance at error, as intrinsically evil, derogatory to the cause of our religion, and indicating a want of faith in God; will afterwards find by experience, that the most frank, manly, and straightforward course is also the wisest; and will have averted many of the very evils into which a timorous and crooked policy, adopted through apprehension of those evils, would have led them.’

H. B.

Manchester, 1838.





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P R E F A C E

TO THE FIRST ENGLISH EDITION.

THE ‘Tribute to the Memory of the Apostles,’* was first published in the United States, in 1832. It came into my possession in June, 1836, and is now, at the request of several much esteemed friends, submitted to the British public.

It was sent to me by a Christian friend who formerly resided in this country: but who emigrated to the United States about fourteen years ago, and is now resident in Philadelphia. He stood connected with the Particular Baptists in that country until about five years ago, when he became convinced of the imperative nature of divine truth, and for conscience sake, felt obliged to withdraw from their communion. At that period, he and seven others commenced a new society. They are now in number more than one hundred, and stand connected with the reformed churches—with the many thousands of disciples who, in that country, have ‘laid aside all human theories as a bond of union.’ They are now built together upon the simple testimony of the apostles, ‘Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.’ They consider that the religion of Jesus was given at once to the world: that it is as perfect as the universe which he has created; that it consists simply in believing what is said, obeying what is commanded, and endeavouring to tread in

* This, which was one of the original titles, has been discontinued in the present Edition. It appears to have been adopted in reference to another American work, called, ‘A Tribute to the Memory of the Pilgrims,’ not known in this country.—ED.

the steps of the first churches, ever remembering Him who has said, ‘ Then are you my friends when you do whatsoever I have commanded you.’*

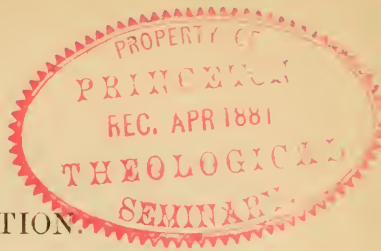
The object contemplated in re-publishing this essay, is not personal emolument, but simply, that multitudes now professing religion, especially the young, who, there is reason to fear, are still many of them ignorant of the *nature* of that kingdom, which is ‘ not of this world,’ may be instructed in the knowledge of that *order of worship* which the exalted Head of the church has instituted to be observed by all his disciples to the end of time. If this object be in any degree realized, I shall feel amply rewarded.

J. W.

* See Note 1. p. 89.

AN EXHIBITION
OF THE
FIRST CHURCHES.





INTRODUCTION.

“BRETHREN, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is **THE WORD** which ye have heard from the beginning.” The holy union of the redeemed, for which we pray, can be accomplished only by the means divine wisdom has appointed. Our blessed Lord, in his prayer for this important object, has plainly taught us our duty in this respect; ‘Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth.’ By returning to this perfect standard, and by that *only*, will Zion shine forth in her pristine glory, ‘beautiful as Tirzah’ and ‘terrible,’ to her enemies, ‘as an army with banners,’ Alas! how have the professed disciples of the Son of God been corrupted from the simplicity and purity of their divine Master? How presumptuously has the carnal mind usurped the prerogative of Zion’s King, substituting its own corrupt mandates for the perfect laws of heavenly wisdom and love, and polluting those streams which make glad the City of God!

Beloved brethren, in this day of profession and zeal, has not our Lord ‘somewhat against’ us in this matter! Have we not fallen from that strict conformity to the holy pattern, which constitutes Zion ‘the ground and pillar of the truth,’ and the approved temple of the living God? Has not conformity to the world, which is passing away, excited the profane conceit that the only wise God has commanded a trifle; and the impious practice of trifling with what ‘he has commanded?’ Have we not too much forgotten those recorded fearful tokens of his holy indignation, which teach us that ‘TO OBEY is better than sacrifice, and TO HEARKEN, than the fat of rams?’

Whatever may be the comparative importance of the divine commands, it is a violation of the law of love to trifle with the least. It is a violation of express precept. 'These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone.' If, in respect to those laws that related to matters which were only patterns of the heavenly things (or christian ordinances) the solemn injunction was given, 'see that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount,' can we suppose that it is a matter of indifference, whether or not we obey those laws which relate to the heavenly things themselves?

In the natural body, some functions are more important to its vitality and health than others; yet none are superfluous: all are necessary to its perfection. The spiritual mind may discern the same wisdom and beneficence displayed in the laws which are designed to inspire the life and regulate the growth of the spiritual body, that we may all come to the stature of a perfect man in Christ. If, in any point, this adaptation, by infinite wisdom, of the means to the end, be inscrutable by us; a proper confidence in that wisdom will never hesitate on the question of obedience. Here, indeed, is a peculiar test of our love.

The affirmative answer to the question, whether or not Jesus Christ has prescribed a particular form of government and order of worship, appears to the writer to comport best with the record of truth, and with the fact that Messiah has done all things well. It is indeed true that he has not done this 'in minute and circumstantial detail.' This is not the method divine wisdom has chosen to instruct us in the new Testament. The truths of the doctrine of Christ, which all his true disciples believe, are not so revealed. If our Lord only makes known his will, whatever the manner may be, it is our duty and privilege to obey. If 'many and serious evils are occasioned by

the existence of different denominations,' may we not hope to find, in the perfect word, a remedy for these evils? May we not expect to find, in precept and example, our duty so plainly marked out, as to justify the divine requirement that 'there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment?'

"Of all opinions, (says a judicious writer) that which accounts for the diversity of religious sentiment and practice, by the alleged obscurity and deficiency of Scripture, is the most hostile to unity, as well as the most injurious to the character of revelation. So long as it prevails among christians, these diversities may be expected to exist. There is neither the authority of God, nor a probable hope of success, to stimulate the advocates of this opinion to exertion in the advancement of unity. Their example must tend to keep all parties in countenance, and to prevent them from examining the grounds of their peculiar views. Men will not distract their minds with an investigation, which is likely to terminate in the same uncertainty with which it commences. Will they be forward to encounter the odium attending a change of religious sentiments, the resentment of a deserted party, or the loss of worldly interest, in favour of opinions, which, after all, may not be more scriptural than those they renounce?"

It deserves our serious consideration, whether the supposed deficiency of scriptural precept and precedent for church order, and consequent right of human interference, was not the stepping stone into mystical Babylon. "We are apt to look upon the rise of Antichrist as the work of wicked men alone, and to suppose that they who fostered him, had all the mischievous views that are discerned in the full grown monster. Nothing can be more unjust. Many of them, no doubt, conceived themselves to be lawfully exerting this privilege of discretionary arrangement, and enacting those rules which were for the prosperity

of religion. Once admit the right of legislation, and there is no possibility of setting bounds to it in practice."

Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one, as he and his Father are one. The apostles taught the same things *'every where in every church.'* It is obvious then, that if the Saviour's prayer be answered, and his commands given to the apostles, obeyed, there can be *'but one denomination of christians in the world.'* *Is Christ divided?* Could there ever have been more than one denomination of christians, if the disciples of Christ had not disobeyed the command to *'be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment?'* Could this have been, if they had kept the ordinances as they are delivered in the word of the Lord? And can it be a question of doubtful determination, whether the consummation of our Saviour's prayer, in the perfect obedience of his disciples to his commandments, *'would have been a blessing?'**

* We regret, for the truth's sake, that the respected author of *'a Tribute to the Memory of the Pilgrims,'* has so far justified the unhappy division among the saints, as to remark on the supposition, of there being but one denomination, *'it seems highly probable, that in such a case, the whole church would have been a dead sea.'* If such would have been the result, it certainly follows that it is no more the duty of the disciples of Christ to obey the apostolic injunction, to *'be perfectly joined together in the same mind,'* (1 Cor. i. 10.) than it is to throw themselves into a *'dead sea.'* The one denomination of antichrist, *'during the dark ages,'* may indeed be exhibited by such a figure. But does the fact of wicked men being united in error furnish an argument against good men being united in truth? *Christ's* *'one denomination,'* and *Antichrist's* *'one denomination,'* are as diverse as light and darkness. It is an incontrovertible fact, that in the Apostolic age, there was but *'one denomination.'* Was that *'a dead sea?'* We have no expectations of the full accomplishment of the prophetic vision of the living waters of salvation flowing throughout this world of sin and woe, (Ezek. 47,) until christians, by holy conformity to the word of truth, become united in one denomination. Our Lord prayed for the perfect union of his disciples in the truth, that the world may believe that the Father had sent him. John xvii. 21.

Whether sects, which are classed with the works of the flesh, (Gal. v. 20,) have been the means of keeping religion alive in the world; or the prolific source of hatred, variance, emulation and wrath, ecclesiastical history will inform us.

That the usurpation of the sole prerogative of Zion's King to enact laws for the

Whether the writer be correct or not, in believing that Messiah has favoured his subjects with a perfect model of church order; and in believing that the opposite opinion has been often adopted as a convenient subterfuge from the just charge of making void his commands by our own traditions, it will be admitted that 'whatever the scriptures have decided, on this subject, is of divine authority; but nothing else is of such authority, or at all binding on the consciences of men.'

Let us then 'stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein,' that we may find rest for our souls.

The truth that Antichrist had commenced his corrupting career when the apostle John wrote to his brethren, (1 John ii. 18,) is conclusive proof of the obvious duty of applying the above important direction to no period subsequent to the days of the apostles. No professed or real purity of any church, which has since existed, can substantiate a claim to be, in any respect, the model of christian duty. This is the high and sole prerogative of that Word which 'abideth for ever.'

regulation of divine worship, founded on the pretended deficiency of the perfect word, has been the fruitful source of strife, discord, and every evil work, is obviously true. If, amid this lamentable scene, which has been the scoff of the infidel and a fatal stumbling block to dying men, some have been excited to inquire after truth, this is no more proof that such division is desirable, than the fact of the divided state of a once united and happy family giving occasion to some of its members to labour for a re-union, would be proof that such a state of discord is not to be lamented. Of what advantage is it for christians to be excited to inquire after truth, if it be not important and truly desirable that they should be 'one denomination,' or united in truth! If the *end* is not desirable, neither are the *means*. How can Mr. Hawes exhort us *all* to 'stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein?' If *all* should obey this excellent exhortation, and, by divine favour, find the good way, there could be 'but one denomination.' Could this delightful scene be realized in our day, as, we doubt not it will be, ere Messiah's Kingdom is consummated, we have no doubt Mr. H. instead of contemplating such a state of the church as a 'dead sea,' would join with us in the cheering exclamation, 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'

OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THE Temple of Janus was shut. The era of celestial peace had arrived. Its song was chanted by angelic choirs. The harbinger of the Prince of Peace had appeared. The Son of the Eternal descended from the heavenly glory; took the body prepared him, sojourned in this rebellious world of the Almighty's dominions, and loved, and taught, and died, and rose, and ascended to the right hand of the heavenly majesty, there to reign until the kingdom of everlasting love is perfected, and given up to the ALL IN ALL.

Then was fulfilled the prophetic word, 'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.'

It is the sole prerogative of the Son of the Blessed, to reign in Zion by the pleasure of the Father, who hath declared, 'yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' 'This is my beloved Son, HEAR YE HIM.'

This glorious kingdom, which is destined to exhibit to the redeemed, and to the powers in the heavenly places, the matchless wisdom and love of the Infinite, through eternity, is variously denominated in the Word of Truth. It is called 'the kingdom (or reign) of God,' 'of Christ,' 'of heaven.' The subjects of this kingdom are designated, 'The church of the living God,—the ground and pillar of the truth;' 'God's building,' 'a spiritual house,' 'a holy priesthood,' who offer spiritual sacrifices; 'the light of the world.'

Our Saviour has plainly taught us the holy nature of this kingdom: *My kingdom is not of this world*: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:' 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter

into the kingdom of heaven : ' Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' His apostles taught the same holy truth. ' Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.'

The term *Church* signifies *called out*, or *an assembly*. In the new Testament it is always used either in reference to the whole family of the redeemed in heaven and on earth ; or to a single congregation of the saints in a particular place. In the first sense it is used in the following passages : ' The general assembly and *CHURCH* of the first born : ' ' Upon this rock I will build my *CHURCH* : ' ' Christ also loved the *CHURCH* : ' ' The *CHURCH*, which is his *BODY*.'

In the second sense it frequently occurs : The ' Church at Jerusalem : ' ' at Corinth : ' at ' Ephesus : ' at ' Smyrna : ' &c.

It is not applied, in the singular, to a number of congregations in a particular region. We do not read of the *church*, but of the *churches* of Achaia ; nor of the Gentile *church*, but of ' all the *churches* of the Gentiles.' So we read also of ' the *churches* of Galatia,' the *churches* of Asia,' &c.

When our Lord had finished the work given him by the Father, and ' through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen,' he came to the mount of Galilee, ' and spake unto them, saying, all power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, (i.e. this state.*) Amen.'

* Campbell.

OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES.

As our present inquiry relates particularly to that order of the Church, which divine wisdom has instituted for the manifestation of its true character, and the advancement of its holy interests in the world, it is important to observe, that our Lord chose and qualified his apostles for the high purpose of organizing the Churches of the saints according to his own commandments given unto them. They received of the Lord, that which they delivered to his disciples. 1 Cor. xi. 23. They taught all things whatsoever Christ commanded them. Matt. xxviii. 20. Having invested them with this high authority, and set them on their thrones, Jesus said, '*he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.*' They were apostles, 'not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father.' They were the living witnesses of the ascended Saviour. Acts v. 32. Acting in this official character, they could 'do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.' Such was their holy inspiration and authority, that they could say, '**HE THAT IS OF GOD HEARETH US.**'

We plainly learn, in these declarations of holy truth, that in respect to authority, there is no difference between the inspired testimony of the apostles, and the testimony of their divine Master. In fact, both these are the testimony of God himself. What the apostles taught was the very truth which they received of their Lord. What Jesus taught, he received of God. 'I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak.'

OF THE RULE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

HAVING contemplated, with holy admiration, the ministry of the Son of God, attested by those powerful and beneficent miracles, which, by their resistless evidence, constrained even the reluctant assent of his enemies to the divinity of his mission; our obligation to make his will the rule of our duty, in obedience to the Father's command—**HEAR YE HIM**—is fully established.

Having proved, from the word of truth, the equal authority of the precepts of the apostles with those of their Master, it is not less evident that we are to regard these also as forming the rule of christian duty.

There is another rule, or rather the same rule in a different form; the neglect of which has much conduced to the divisions unhappily existing among the disciples of Jesus: **THE APPROVED PRACTICES OF THE FIRST CHURCHES.**

It is an important fact, that the apostles taught the same things in all the churches of the saints. Paul having given directions to the church at Corinth, (1 Cor. vii. 17) adds, '*and so I ordain in all churches.*' Commending Timothy, (1 Cor. iv. 17) he writes, 'who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I **TEACH EVERY WHERE IN EVERY CHURCH.**' The churches received some apostolic directions *by word*, and some *by letter*. The church at Thessalonica is commanded to hold the traditions which it received *by word*, as well as those which it received *by letter*. Now such things as any of the churches received by word, we can receive only by an allusion to their practice in some indirect way. When we read, then, of any part of their order which is not disapproved, we may conclude that this they had by word from the apostles, although we cannot point out any precept enjoining it. Example then is equal to precept, because it necessarily implies

precept.* Nothing, in respect to church order, appears to have been left to the discretion of uninspired men. When the apostle had given particular directions to the church at Corinth, in his letter, he does not add, the rest I leave to your own discretion ; but, ‘the rest will I set in order when I come.’

Keeping in view, then, the important fact, that the apostles taught the same things in every church, and set all things in order under the influence of the Spirit of God ; may not the unbiassed inquirer after truth, expect to find, in the precepts of his divine Master, in those of his inspired apostles, and in the approved examples of the first churches, a perfect rule of duty, and a perfect model of a Christian church ?

That the rule of Christian duty is to be found in the precepts of Jesus Christ and his apostles, and in the approved practices of the first churches, recorded in the new Testament, is the great principle we adopt as the basis of our enquiries in every part of this interesting subject. Every ordinance of subsequent invention, whether of papal or protestant origin, whatever may be its claim to antiquity, or to pretended expediency, we consign to its proper place, among that heap of anti-christian rubbish, which, alas ! has so long buried out of sight the true nature and holy simplicity of the Christian institutes.

* Though as a general rule this is true, it is, in my view, to be understood with some limitation. The example of the first Christians implies a precept in every case, where it is certain their practice was the result of obedience to law. When, however, any recorded practice is so situated as to furnish no evidence of the existence of a Christian law, if it be clear that the practice naturally and necessarily arose from the customs or manners of the times, or from circumstances that would have led to this result, independent of any apostolic precept, the example of the early believers implies no precept whatever. This limitation of the rule affects in no degree, it is obvious, the conclusion, that nothing has been left to the discretion of uninspired men : but it is proper to bear in mind, that it is the revealed will of the Head of the Church, that constitutes the rule of duty to his people, and not every thing the first Christians did and said.—EDIT.

OF THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE.

'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 'We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.' 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.' 'And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life: and this life is in his Son.' 'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' 'Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which was spoken in the prophets; behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.' 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.' 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' 'God now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they had heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be immersed every one of you into the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins,' &c. 'Then they that gladly received his word were immersed,' &c.

IMMERSION.*

‘John did immerse¹ in the wilderness, and preached the immersion of repentance, for the remission of sins.’ Mark i: 4. ‘After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them and immersed.’ John iii. 22. ‘Though Jesus himself immersed not, but his disciples.’ John iv. 2. ‘And John also was immersing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there.’ John iii. 23. ‘Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, immersing them into† the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ Matt. xxviii. 19. ‘He that believeth and is immersed, shall be saved.’ Mark xvi. 16. ‘When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were immersed both men and women.’ Acts viii. 12. ‘And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the Eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be immersed? And Philip said: If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both

* As the writer substitutes the English terms for the Greek, which are, with little variation, retained in King James’s version, he submits to the candid consideration of the reader, the following reasons:—

1. It is proper that every part of our Lord’s will should be revealed in our own tongue, that the wayfaring man, though he cannot understand Greek, may not err therein.

2. It is requisite that we know *definitely* what Jesus Christ requires of us in this

† The Greek preposition is *eis* (into,) not *en* (in.) The believer is immersed into the profession of the truth respecting the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. “For as many of you as have been immersed *into Christ* have put on Christ.” (Gal. iii. 27.) See also 1 Cor. x. 2, in the original respecting the above prepositions. “And were all immersed *into Moses*, *in* the cloud and *in* the sea.”

1 See Note A

Philip and the Eunuch ; and he immersed him.' Acts viii. 36, 38. 'And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were immersed.' Acts xviii. 8. 'And now why tarriest thou ? arise and be immersed, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' Acts xxii. 16. 'And he arose and was immersed.' Acts ix. 18. 'Know ye not that so many of us as were immersed into Jesus Christ, were immersed into his death ? Therefore, we are buried with him by immersion into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.' Rom. vi. 3, 5. 'And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes ; and was immersed, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.' Acts xvi. 32, 34. 'And when she (Lydia, whose heart the Lord had opened) was immersed, and her household," &c. 'And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house

ordinance. If our Lord has requested us to be sprinkled with water, we do not obey him if we are immersed. If he has required us to be immersed, we do not obey him if we are sprinkled. The Greek term, (the most learned Pædobaptist writers being judges) is as definite and precisely of the same import, as the English term *immersion*. Yet by reason of the various practices of sprinkling, pouring, and immersion, the word *baptize* does not convey to every mind the will of the Lord, as the word *immerse* does. The latter, therefore, which is the true corresponding English term, ought to be substituted, that all may plainly understand their duty.

2. It cannot rationally be supposed that forms so different, can be equally significant or appropriate in our public profession of faith in the truth of the Gospel, and especially in the death and resurrection of the Son of God, which is the foundation of all our hope for eternity. The intelligent disciple of Christ, who is *willing* to be "buried with him in immersion," must clearly perceive that neither sprinkling nor pouring, will at all correspond with the circumstantial narrations of the ordinance in the new Testament.

of Lydia ; and when they had seen the brethren they comforted them, and departed.' Acts xvi. 14, 15, 40. 'The like figure whereunto, even IMMERSION, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,') 'by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' 1 Peter iii. 21. 'Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing (bath) of water by the word.' Eph. v. 26. 'According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing (bath) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Titus iii. 5. 'There is one Lord, one faith, one immersion, one God and Father of all.' Eph. iv. 5, 6.

From these declarations of divine truth, we learn :—

1. That immersion² in water, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is a *permanent* ordinance of Jesus Christ.

2. That it is appointed for all who repent and believe in his name.

3. That it is the *immediate* duty of believers. As soon as they believed the apostles' doctrine, they were immersed.

4. That while the scriptures plainly teach, that it is *the blood of Jesus Christ* which cleanseth us from all sin, and that God, *for Christ's sake*, forgives the penitent believer ; the same scriptures teach also that we are to be immersed '*for the remission of sins*,' and that 'he that believeth and is immersed shall be saved.'

5. That the right to immerse, belongs to every man who publicly preaches the gospel, and is not the exclusive duty of the bishop or elder. Philip, who immersed the Eunuch, was not an elder. He was, indeed, appointed as one of the

seven, but for what purpose? Not to the elder's, office, nor to immerse, but to 'serve tables' in 'the daily ministration' of food. The modern opinion, that believers may publicly preach, and not immerse, is separating what God has joined. The former is the greater work of the two.

6. As the scriptures of truth declare, in respect to a person's right to this ordinance, 'if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest : ' it is a manifest violation of this declaration to refuse to immerse a believer in the Son of God, until he assents to all the articles of a religious creed, or consents to join any particular church. Every believer is to be immersed. After this, he is to be exhorted to observe all things Christ has commanded.

7. The holy word presents not a vestige of proof that either the sprinkling, or the immersion of infants, is an ordinance of God. 'The children of the flesh are not the children of God ; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.' Who are the children of the promise? 'If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' Rom. ix. 8. Gal. iii. 29.³ This disannuls the claim urged in favour of infants, founded on the Abrahamic covenant, and is a plain and conclusive refutation of the innumerable pages that have been written on the subject. As to circumcision, it is idle to discuss the question, whether or not infant sprinkling, or immersion, has come in the room of it, before we have proved by divine authority, it has *come at all*.⁴ Not a precept, not an example for this rite, do we find in the *only* rule of Christian duty.⁵ We have no such custom, neither had the first churches. Several households were immersed. 'To all that were in the jailers', the apostle 'spake the word of the Lord.' 'And he rejoiced, believing in God with

3 See note C

4 See note D

5 See note E

all his house.' The household of Lydia were *brethren*, capable of being *comforted* by holy truth. But if these particulars had not been recorded, every unbiassed and reflecting mind must perceive that, if there were any number of household baptisms recorded, this would be no proof in favour of infants, unless there be positive proof, that in these households, there was at least one infant, and that that infant was baptized.

Far be it, that we should deprive our dear children of any real privilege. Have not many parents been instrumental in doing so, by tempting their children to neglect the divine ordinance of immersion, through the previous substitution of a tradition of human origin, which makes void the commandment of the Eternal? Surely we deceive ourselves, if we look for any blessing from on High to rest on our own inventions, which thrust out Jehovah's mandates from his own temple. Jesus Christ blessed infants on earth without this rite, and he can bless them in heaven. The intelligent and unbiassed consideration of the scriptural import of the holy ordinance of Immersion, must issue in the clear conviction that it has no adaptation to infants. It is a profession of the subject's *own* faith in the death and resurrection of the Son of God, and of his own dying unto sin, and rising to a holy life with his ascended Lord. It is the blessed badge of discipleship. What have unconscious babes to do with this act of holy understanding and love? How can it be to such, 'the answer of a good conscience towards God?' For the honour of the King of Zion, whose ordinance has so long, and so extensively, been made void by an unscriptural rite, we earnestly and affectionately entreat professing Christians, before they repeat it, to produce a satisfactory answer from their Father's book, to the solemn question, '*Who hath required this at your hand?*' In what did the sin of offering strange fire consist? In pre-

suming to do that as an ordinance of God, which the Lord commanded not.

8. We learn the high privilege of the believer, in the enjoyment of that sweet peace and holy instruction, which this ordinance imparts. Buried with his Lord in immersion, he obeys the requirement, which is the first appointed test of his love to his Redeemer; and enjoys the cheering consciousness of the remission of his sins, by the death and resurrection of his Saviour; of which this institution is so beautifully significant. The Holy Spirit witnesses unto his spirit that he is born of God; and, rising to spiritual life, he bids adieu to a carnal world, and passes onward to the celestial city. In the very manner his Lord hath appointed and consecrated by his own example, he publicly avows Jehovah to be his God and portion for ever. He yields a cordial subjection to his Redeemer, the appointed King of Zion. His heaven-born spirit comes into the fellowship of the whole redeemed family, and of all the heavenly hosts. He has taken upon him the yoke of his Master, and received a precious earnest of everlasting love.

In the course of his pilgrimage to his everlasting home, when assailed by temptation, he looks back to the favoured and solemn hour, when, before God and men, he professed to die unto sin and rise with his Lord to holiness of life. Remembering his sacred vocation, which is preeminently adapted to teach him his constant duty of holy conformity to his Master; and relying on his favour, who first called him out from the world, he continues to tread it beneath his feet, and presses on to the unspeakable glory. In like precious faith, which he exhibited in his immersion, he meets the last enemy and triumphs over him, with the blessed assurance of being raised to immortality.*

* That the enemies of Christ should make light of his institutions is consistent with their character. That his friends should trifle with those institutions, and

We tremble at the word of the Lord, which invests, with divine authority, all his requirements, whether those requirements relate to the eating of a little fruit; the offering of fire, or a lamb; or immersion in water. Whatever God has sanctified as a test of our obedience, is no longer, in that respect, to be called common. If his command be disobeyed, his authority is contemned, whatever may be the real or supposed insignificance of the ordinance. Many will not admit that it is possible, so much importance can be attached to immersion. Voltaire could not conceive it possible, that such consequences as the Bible represents, could result from the

teach others to do so, is truly grievous. Alas! the power of prejudice! We may as well deny that Jesus Christ has commanded us to believe, as deny that he has commanded us to be immersed. The original term for the latter, equally signifies immersion, as the original term for the former signifies believing. When we think also of the important and awful connexion, in which our Lord himself has placed this ordinance in the commission, 'he that believeth and is immersed SHALL BE SAVED,' we are amazed at the presumption of many of his professed followers. Does it become us, worms of the dust, to tell the King of Zion, that his commands are not of sufficient importance to demand our obedience? He says, 'he that hath my commandments, *and keepeth them*, he it is that loveth me.' What then must he think of us, if, when he commands us to be immersed, we tell him that whether we be immersed or sprinkled, is of no more importance than the shape or 'cut of a coat?' Mr. Hawes confesses that, 'in the primitive churches,' this ordinance was administered 'usually by immersion.' Why then does he not follow primitive example? But he adds '*not always*.' For the truth's sake, we ask, was not this a mere salvo for human tradition? As he chose to say nothing of the scriptural authority 'for infant baptism,' so he chose 'to say nothing of the scriptural authority' for this gratuitous assertion. We respectfully intreat him to reconsider it, and either to sustain it by one scriptural example, or reject it, as a perversion of the 'right ways of the Lord.' We ask him to bring his own practices to the same standard, to which he has brought those of the Episcopalians. We ask him to abide impartially by his own just principle, 'Whatever the scriptures have decided, on this subject, is of divine authority; but nothing else is of such authority, or at all binding on the consciences of men.' 'Now the Scriptures have decided' (Mr. H. being judge) that immersion was actually practised: nor has he adduced a single exception. It follows then, upon his own principles, 'that immersion is of divine authority' *in all cases*, unless he can produce an exception. Mr. Payson has justly remarked, 'Our God is a jealous God, and we must make our offerings in the manner he has commanded, and with a right spirit, or they will be an offence in his sight, and he will not accept them.'

One prevalent and plausible mode of covering an unwillingness to obey this holy ordinance, is the pretence, that attention to the subject will divert the mind from more important duties. But what would a master think of a man

eating of a little fruit. Are not a few drops as good as a fountain? 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' Ah! proud reason of mortal man! when wilt thou know thy place? When wilt thou learn that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, however simple the channel through which it flows; whether it be the word of the mouth, the touch of the garment, the shadow of an apostle, or the liquid grave?

Reader, do you plead your sincerity, and your regard for the cause of Christ, while you disobey his commands? Might not Uzzah also have pleaded his sincerity and regard for the Ark of God? Might not Peter have pleaded his sincerity and regard

just engaged in his service, who, on receiving his first orders, should pretend he was too intent to serve him in some more important manner, to obey the orders? Would he not be told, *his business was to obey* his master? Or what would a judge think of a violator of the law, who should plead in his defence, that he was too much engaged in attending to more important duties to observe those which he has neglected? Would he not be reminded 'these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the others undone?'

In a time of religious revival some say, 'there must not be a word about baptism; it will injure the cause; it will stop the work.' How is it that such persons cannot see that they are opposing Christ and his apostles? Alas! the deceitfulness of our hearts! In the name of truth, we ask, whose cause must that be, which God's truth can injure? At the glorious pentecostal revival, when awakened sinners exclaimed, 'what shall we do?' the apostle replied, 'repent and be immersed every one of you.' Had some modern opposers of this ordinance been present, they would have corrected him, and replied, 'this is not the time to talk about baptism; you will stop the work.' Whether the holy apostle would not have rebuked them in the spirit and words of his Master, 'ye savour not the things which be of God, but those which be of men,' deserves solemn consideration. When shall we cease to oppose the institutes of Omniscience, with the vain dictates of our own fallible wisdom? When shall we learn that it is God's province *to command*, and man's *to obey*? Are we not plainly taught, in the holy word, that the purpose to *sacrifice unto the Lord*, will not shield us from the charge of rebellion, when we depart from the divine requirements? 1 Sam. xv. Some think the use of water more or less, in the divine ordinances under consideration, is a matter of little or no consequence. Infidels think the same of the eating of a little fruit in Eden. These things, indeed, abstractly viewed, may be of little consequence. It is the command of the Eternal which clothes the ordinances of the Bible with unspeakable importance, and which connects them, as tests of our obedience, with the retributions of eternity.

for his Master's life? When will infallible testimony suffice to teach us, that when we deviate from the TRUTH, no such pleas will screen us from the just rebuke, 'thou savourest not the things which be of God, but the things which be of men?'

Far be it, that we should not appreciate virtue, truth, and piety, wherever found. But immersion is the law of the King, and must be obeyed. Reader, do you charge us with uncharitableness and bigotry? What! for maintaining the laws of the Most High, which he has spoken to us by his Son? Against whom, then, are thy charges but against thy Maker? For our part, when we hear our Saviour assuring us, that he that believeth and is immersed shall be saved; when we hear his inspired messengers commanding dying men to repent and be immersed every one of you into the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins*—when we are taught by the spirit of truth, that immersion doth also now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that God saves us by the washing (bath) of regeneration, (or immersion) and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; although we do not say, that believers, who are not immersed, will not finally be saved, we do say for ourselves, that we dare not go to the judgment, neglecting this duty.

OF THE NUMBER NECESSARY TO CONSTITUTE A CHURCH.

'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'

To be gathered together in Christ's name, is to assemble in his Spirit, to obey his commandments. Here, then, we plainly learn, that it is the duty and privilege of the lowest plurality of true disciples, thus to assemble; which is synonymous with saying, that the lowest plurality of disciples constitute a Christian assembly or church. The term *church* imports an assembly. If two are not an assembly, how many are?

If we depart from this plain rule of our Lord, how can we ever determine the requisite number to constitute a church? There is not a single passage which gives the least intimation, that any number above the lowest plurality is essential.

To argue that the lowest plurality cannot be a church, because they cannot have officers, is to oppose scriptural facts. We may as well say that the church at Jerusalem was not a church until the seven deacons were chosen; or, that the numerous congregations of the saints, to whom Paul applied this term, (Acts xiv. 23) were not churches until elders were ordained.

Our Lord's words, (Matt. xviii. 17,) furnish no objection. In giving this grand law of his kingdom, it was necessary to suppose churches in the most complete state. Had our Lord adjusted the precept particularly to the smallest churches that could lawfully exist, it would not have suited larger churches. Had he commanded the offended to cast off the impenitent offender, with a design to shew that two might constitute a church, the precept would not have suited a church of three, or any other number. But by suiting the precept to a church in its most complete state, it is suited to every church. In a church consisting of two, when the offended, after proper remonstrance, cuts off the offender from his fellowship, the spirit of this precept is completely fulfilled.

It is inquired, what are two or three disciples to do when assembled? We reply, it is their duty and blessed privilege, in holy simplicity, to obey ALL the ordinances of their Master, which they can obey in their present circumstances; unless their Master has made exceptions. They are to come together, on the first day of the week, to break bread, (Acts xx. 7) to pray, (1 Tim. ii. 1) to sing praises, (Col. iii. 16) to read the scriptures, (Col. iv. 16) to teach and exhort one another. 1 Cor. xiv. 31. Heb. x. 25.

All these commands are given *to disciples*: not one of them to church officers exclusively. If they are not obligatory on the lowest plurality, on what number are they obligatory? If *all* are not obligatory on the lowest plurality, how can we prove that *any* are? If Jesus Christ has made no exception, we have no right to make any? Has he made any? He has not. Disciples have therefore no more right to neglect one of these, because they have not an elder or a bishop, than they have to neglect another.

Here let us pause, and admire the beautiful simplicity of the spiritual temple. What divine excellency opens on the vision that can penetrate the mists, by which the wisdom that is foolishness with God, has obscured the Christian institutes! How wise and gracious are the adaptations of the laws of Jesus to all the varied circumstances and wants of his favoured disciples? Any two or three, in any part of the world, possessing the new Testament of their Lord, who will call none other master, are fully competent to enter immediately, and freely partake of all the provisions of the spiritual house. They need no bishop, nor council, nor synod, nor pope, to constitute them a church. Carnal wisdom may not acknowledge them, but their record is on high. In that word which abideth for ever, they are recognized as the temple of the living God, and the ground and pillar of the truth. While they walk in simple holy obedience to that word, their title to the high appellation of a Christian Church will be sufficiently confirmed by the cheering blessing of him who has assured them that, 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'

TIME OF ASSEMBLING.

'Upon the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.' Acts

xx. 7. 'Then the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled.' John xx. 19. 'And after eight days again his disciples were within.' John xx. 26. If we compare the last declaration with the words, 'after three days he shall rise again,' there can be no reasonable doubt that it means the next first day of the week. It is evident that Paul tarried at Troas seven days, for the purpose of meeting the disciples 'on the first day of the week;' being 'ready to depart on the morrow.' Acts xx. 7. The apostle, we are assured, taught the same things in every church. Consequently, it was the practice of every church, to meet on the first day of the week, to break bread, and to observe all the ordinances of divine worship. There is a manifest propriety in the disciples' of Jesus assembling on that day, on which their blessed Lord, after being delivered for their offences, was raised for their justification. Well may they, on this memorable day, commemorate his dying love and glorious triumph over the powers of darkness, uniting in the animating song, the Lord is risen indeed. Hallelujah !

OF THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH.

'Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you.' 1 Cor. xi. 2.

The term *ordinance* imports appointment or institution, and is applied, in the above passage, to the *general* laws of Christ, respecting divine worship, delivered by his apostles to the churches. It was used in the old Testament in the same general sense, in application to all the commandments of the Mosaic dispensation. Mal. iii. 7. The only passage in our version of the new Testament, in which the term occurs, in

reference to the laws of the New Covenant is, 1 Cor. xi. 2. There is no more scriptural or rational authority for applying it *exclusively* to immersion and the Lord's supper, than for applying it exclusively to preaching and discipline. Some speak of the two ordinances, and some of the seven sacraments. By the adoption of such unscriptural terms, error has been perpetuated to the disparagement of the King's laws. The prayers, praises, and mutual exhortation of the assembled disciples, are as much church ordinances, as their mutual participation of the supper. It is true, some of these are *private* duties also. But to deny that prayer is a church ordinance, because it is the duty of the closet, is to deny, that it is the law of Christ we should pray when assembled, because we pray apart.

By 'the ordinances,' the apostle undoubtedly meant the 'ALL THINGS' which the Lord Jesus commanded his ambassadors to teach his disciples 'to observe.' Matt. xxviii. 20. To determine whether any thing be a church ordinance, we have only to look into the new Testament, and observe, whether it be enjoined on, or practised by, the first churches.

These holy ordinances are the means which Jesus has appointed for the sanctification of his disciples, and the conversion of his enemies. 'They that gladly received his word were immersed, and they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.' How plain is the order of the heavenly kingdom to the unsophisticated and unbiassed mind! 'Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were immersed.' After this, they were embodied, and kept the ordinances as the apostles delivered them. 1 Cor. xi. 1. To add to; to take from; or in any respect to alter these ordinances, is to impeach the wisdom and beneficence of the Most High. What arrogance and presumption! Worms of the dust, practically charging the means

which infinite wisdom has appointed, with incompetency, and claiming superior ability to perfect them !

OF PRAYER.

‘ And they continued stedfastly in prayers.’ Acts ii. 42. ‘ I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.’ 1 Tim. ii. 1. ‘ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.’ Eph. vi. 18. ‘ I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.’ 1 Cor. xiv. 15. ‘ I will, therefore, that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel,’ &c. 1 Tim. ii. 8, 9. ‘ Let him ask in faith nothing wavering.’ James i. 6. ‘ When ye pray, use not vain repetitions.’ ‘ After this manner, therefore, pray ye, *Our Father*,’ &c. Matt. vi. 9.

Although our Father in heaven is of one mind, working all things after the counsel of his own will, and knoweth what we need before we ask him ; yet he will be enquired of, by his children, to do the things which he has promised. From the word of the Lord we learn :—

1. That it is the duty and high privilege of the assembled disciples of Jesus, to continue stedfastly *in prayers*.

2. That, although the subsequent prayers of the inspired apostles, (Acts iv. 24) demonstrate that our Lord did not intend to confine his disciples to the very words of the prayer he gave them, yet it is our duty always to regard that excellent model in respect to the manner in which we pray. Adoring the name of the Most High for his glorious perfections—praying for the enlargement of his kingdom—confessing our sins—and sup-

plicating forgiveness and the supply of our wants, in faith, in simplicity, with brevity, without repetition, with the Spirit and understanding—‘all in the name of the Lord Jesus,’ appears to be our duty and blessed privilege in respect to this ordinance.

3. The injunctions given to the churches relative to this ordinance, clearly teach us, that it is the duty of *the brethren generally*, and not of church officers exclusively, to use their gifts in the prayers of the church, at their stated meetings. Consequently, those churches that require or allow elders, or deacons, to perform this service *exclusively*, disobey an ordinance of Jesus Christ, and suffer great spiritual loss. Alas! how have pride and formality, and a carnal desire to please the fastidious taste of worldly men, robbed the churches of Christ of innumerable, fervent, and effectual prayers of righteous men, which avail much!

4. The passages 1 Tim. ii. 8, 9, 12. 1 Cor. xiv. 34, plainly teach the impropriety of Christian females praying or exhorting in the churches.

Beloved brethren, one error leads to another; by neglecting your duty, your elders have been induced to make long prayers, too much confounding prayer and preaching. Several short fervent prayers are more edifying than one of great length. Is there not another prevalent error? Do not many, particularly in the introduction of their prayers in promiscuous assemblies, declare to the Almighty, what they do not believe to be true; viz. that the whole assembly, believers and unbelievers, humble themselves before the Lord, and adore him.

Standing, and kneeling, in prayer, are both scriptural and proper attitudes. Is not that of sitting, in cases of health, indolent and irreverent? Acts xx. 36. Luke xviii. 13.

We do not sufficiently appreciate the high and precious privilege of prayer. It appears to be the uniting link between

earth and heaven. What encouragement has our divine Master given us, to lift our souls to our Father in heaven, and spread our wants and our woes before him ! He is more ready to give us all that we need, than we are to give good gifts to our children. ‘ Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, and come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.’

OF THE LORD’S SUPPER.

‘ Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to the disciples, and said, take, eat ; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the new Testament, (or Covenant) which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.’ Matt. xxi. 26, 28. ‘ And they continued stedfastly in breaking of bread.’ Acts ii. 42. ‘ And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.’ Acts xx. 7. ‘ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? For we being many, are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread.’ 1 Cor. x. 16. ‘ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.’ 1 Cor. xi. 28, 29. ‘ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.’ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

These passages of holy truth teach :—

1. That the ordinance of the supper is appointed as a *per-*

manent duty and privilege in the church, until our Lord shall come 'the second time without sin unto salvation.'

2. That the commemoration of the death of the Son of God, (which is the grand foundation of our hope of immortality) by the breaking of the loaf, was a *principal object* of the assembling of the disciples on the first day of the week. Every ordinance of Jesus is important. No other, however, is so particularly expressed to have been a special object of their assembling as this. It is not recorded, (as modern practice would require) that when Paul preached to the church at Troas, he administered the Lord's supper; but, that when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them. Though they had an apostle for their preacher, the distinguishing object of their meeting was to celebrate the Saviour's love in the appropriate institute. The passage 1 Cor. xi. 20 confirms this, and shows that the professed object of the church coming together was to eat the Lord's supper, although the carnal manner in which they ate and drank, was not recognized by the apostle as an observance of the ordinance. How inconsistent, then, is the modern practice of many churches, who come together every first day of the week, and yet neglect so frequently, the chief object for which the first churches assembled on that day. When we read, that 'they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers;' that they 'came together on the first day of the week, to break bread, and consider the manifest import of 1 Cor. xi. 20, 33, we learn:—

3. That it is the duty and privilege of disciples to observe this ordinance *every* 'first day of the week.' If from the above considerations, this does not appear to be a duty, in vain do we attempt to prove the observance of any particular ordinance on *every* first day of the week. When we hear of a church observing the supper on the first Lord's day in the

month; we at once conclude, it is their custom to do so *every* first Lord's day in the month. So when we read that the first churches came together to break bread on the first day of the week, we cannot with any propriety, avoid the conclusion that this was their constant practice. Acts ii. 46, refers to the daily ministration of food, and not to the Lord's supper. See Acts xxvii. 35.

4. The direction, (1 Cor. xi. 33) 'When ye come together to eat, tarry one for another,' teaches us that they attended to this ordinance soon after they were assembled. This, indeed, comports with the truth already established, that to eat the supper was a special object of their assembling. It is surely objectionable to adopt an order, which places the distinguishing object of meeting, altogether in the back ground; and which conveys the impression, that the chief object of meeting is to hear the bishop preach.

5. We learn from the new Testament, that is the duty of the churches to break bread, although they may be destitute of officers. It is the duty of the churches to appoint elders and deacons as soon as they can, and it is the duty of elders to preside in all ordinances; but the disciples are not debarred by any part of Scripture, from enjoying Christian ordinances, nor exempted from the duty of observing them, on account of the absence of officers. It is an important principle, that officers, whether in church or in state, are not appointed, because we have no right to religious or civil privileges without them, but because we can enjoy those rights and privileges better with them.

The supper is one of the stated ordinances delivered to the churches. 1 Cor. xi. 23. If they are justified in neglecting this ordinance, when they have no elder, it must be, either because it is impracticable, or because they are prohibited in the word of the Lord, in such circumstances. The former will

not be pretended ; a brother may be appointed to preside, and give thanks, or call upon some brother to give thanks for '*the unspeakable gift*' of divine love. In vain, will the most zealous advocate for clerical dignity search the new Testament for a prohibition in this case. We have no more scriptural authority to make the presence of a bishop, or deacon, essential to the observance of the supper, than to make it essential to the observance of the ordinances of prayer, exhortation, or praise. The emblems of the body and blood of our blessed Lord, need no consecrating virtue from official voice or hands, to enable two or three disciples to say, 'the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup which we bless, (or for which we bless God) is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?'

Some 'call for precept, or example, or explicit declaration.' They may as well demand the same to justify the churches assembling to pray, or read the scriptures, without elders. 'There is none of all these to prove, that even the bishop himself should preside in this ordinance.* We do not need them, because we know that he is the ruler, and therefore must preside in every thing.' As plainly do we learn, that it is the duty of the churches to observe ALL ordinances in the best manner they can, if destitute of bishops, unless the apostles have made an exception. If Jesus Christ, by them, has made no exception, we have no right to make any.

Alas ! to what an incalculable extent have the children of God been deprived of the rich provisions of their Father's

*That Acts xx. 11. refers to the apostle's eating for his own refreshment, just before his departure, and not to the ordinance, appears from the following considerations:—

1. The eating is stated to be simply *the individual act of the apostle*.
2. It was then the *second* day of the week, as the day ended at six in the evening.
3. 1 Cor. xi. 33. teaches that they observed the ordinance at the *commencement*, and not at the *close* of their meeting.

house, by the corrupting and degrading usurpations of ambitious lords over God's heritage! When, Christian brethren, shall we return to '*the simplicity which is in Christ*?'

OF READING THE SCRIPTURES, TEACHING AND
EXHORTATION.

'And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.' Col. iv. 16. 'I charge you, by the Lord, that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.' 1 Thes. v. 27. 'Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.' 1 Tim. iv. 13. 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another.' 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth on exhortation.' Rom. xii. 4, 8.

These, and numerous other passages, teach us (in accordance with the prayer of our ascended Redeemer, 'sanctify them through thy truth,') the great importance of divine truth dwelling in us richly in all wisdom, that our love may abound in all knowledge, that [we] may approve things which are excellent, and be sincere, and without offence, until the day of Christ. These, and similar passages, also teach us *the means* which divine wisdom has appointed for this important end:—

1. The reading of the scriptures.

2. Teaching and exhorting one another in the stated assemblies of the churches.

It is the special duty of bishops or elders, to labour in word and doctrine, and thereby ‘feed the church of the Lord.’* But the command to the disciples, to exhort one another when they come together, is as plain and imperative as the command to the bishop to teach. To the Hebrews, the apostle wrote, ‘forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is ; *but exhorting one another*, &c. To the church at Corinth, he writes, ‘desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.’† ‘If therefore, the whole church be come together into one place ; if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all : and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest ; and, so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.’ ‘I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ : that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge ; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you ; so that ye come behind in no gift.’ He informs the church at Ephesus also, that the ascended Saviour ‘gave gifts unto men, for the edifying of the body of Christ.’

Mutual exhortation by the brethren generally, was not done in a corner : it was when ‘*the whole church was come together in one place.*’ 1 Cor. xiv. 23. We learn also, it was when they assembled at their stated meetings on the first day of the

* Griesbach.

† It is obvious that the term *prophesy* here means ordinary speaking of the truth for mutual edification, and not any miraculous gift to foretel future events

week ; for we read of no meetings, of any church, to attend to the ordinances of divine worship, except on that day.

How significant is the apostle's figurative illustration of the great importance and blessed effects of a faithful use of the various gifts in the church. The exercise of all the gifts in the church, is as essential to its true prosperity, as the exercise of all the members of the human body is to its health and usefulness. As there is no superfluous member in the natural body, so there is none in the spiritual. The head may as well say to the feet, you may not walk, because you cannot talk as I can ; as the bishop says to the brethren, you may not exhort, because you cannot teach as I do. 'There are diversities of gifts' for the edifying of the body. But 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.' To neglect the use of these gifts, is to impeach the wisdom, and to contemn the goodness of the ascended Saviour, who imparts them for the blessed purpose of our growth and grace, and increasing union in truth and love. By the faithful and humble use of these varied gifts, they will be improved. Thus, the general fund of knowledge in the things of the holy kingdom, will be constantly increasing for the benefit of the whole church. The churches, in this way, may have a kind of community of goods. The knowledge of individuals becomes part of a common stock. This community has advantages peculiar to itself: All are enriched by it. The most advanced in a church, may not only be refreshed, but informed, by those, much upon the whole, their inferiors in knowledge. As Paul expected to be refreshed by the church of Corinth, so may the most learned bishops receive refreshment from the exhortations of their brethren. Nothing is more unfounded than the notion, that we cannot be benefited except when we learn something which we did not know before. Is it not eminently calculated to confirm us in *the truth*, to hear unlearned men, in their own

unadorned manner, speaking rationally and scripturally upon subjects, the deepest and most interesting that can be presented to the consideration of man? Even the pride of philosophy cannot spurn the massy ingots of rude common sense. It is only, when unlearned men assume the airs of learning, or oratory, that their addresses become disgusting. If the brethren speak the things which they fully understand, in their own manner, I do not think that they are likely to disgust even the infidel philosopher. It is likely, rather that such a one will be astonished and convinced. ‘ Mr. Collins, whom Mr. Newton named archbishop of the free-thinkers, met one day with a plain countryman going to church. He inquired where he was going? To church, sir. What to do there? To worship God. Pray, whether is your God a great or a little God? He is both, sir. How can he be both? He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, and so little that he can dwell in my heart. Collins declared, that this simple answer of the countryman, had more effect upon his mind, than all the volumes which the learned doctors had written against him.

Alas! how many useful gifts have been buried and lost to the church, through the influence of pride, and of that wisdom which is foolishness with God! Obedience to the commands to pray, and to exhort one another, when the disciples come together, is necessary to spiritual fellowship. Are there not many churches, containing hundreds of members, many of whom, through neglecting this duty, have no more acquaintance with each other’s knowledge and experience, in the things of the kingdom, than if they lived in another planet? If, on the other hand, they faithfully observed this ordinance of Jesus, calling none other Master, their hearts would burn within them, with holy fellowship and love. Their union would no longer be merely nominal. This duty, moreover, involves

a happy necessity to search the scriptures, that disciples may be able to teach and admonish one another.

We are also expressly taught that there is an important connexion between this ordinance, and the conversion of unbelievers. ‘If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of ALL, he is judged of ALL, and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.’ 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

Beloved brethren, have we not reason to tremble in the consideration of presumptuously withholding from our fellow men, who hasten to perdition, the very means which God has appointed for their salvation? How often, by divine favour, has the simple, affectionate, and pungent exhortation of some plain Christian, produced the desired effect on the conscience and heart of the sinner, which the systematic discourse of the learned pastor failed to accomplish. Far be it, that we should at all depreciate the importance of the bishop’s office, or his useful labours. But as far be it, that we should neglect and condemn other means which God has appointed, for the perfection of his church, and the conversion of the world.

Is it objected that this ordinance has been abused? True, and what ordinance has not been? It is *the abuse*, and not the proper observance of it, that occasions disorder. To suppose the latter, is to charge God foolishly. The Lord’s supper was abused by the Corinthians. Is it therefore to be neglected? The ordinance we advocate was also abused in the same church. Did Paul, therefore, prohibit all teaching or exhortation, except that of the elders? So far from it, in the very connection that he corrects the abuse, he remarks, ‘ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.’ He prohibits none but females (which indeed

he does very expressly and positively*) from speaking in the church. It is the duty of the church to judge of its gifts, and for the elders to rule in conformity to such judgment, that all may be done to edification.

OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD.

We learn from the new Testament, that it is the duty of the churches to send forth the glad tidings to perishing men; and that it is the duty of *every disciple* to declare the holy truth, as he has ability and opportunity.

‘For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia.’ 1 Thess. i. 8. ‘They that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.’ Acts viii. 4. The latter were not the apostles, nor church officers exclusively, but the brethren of the church of Jerusalem, who were dispersed at the time of the persecution. Divine wisdom overruled the opposition of the powers of darkness, to subserve Emmanuel’s rising kingdom. These dispersed disciples, glowing with divine love and the hope of immortality amid all their temptations, went forth declaring the cheering facts of Messiah’s death and resurrection; that ‘he that believeth and is immersed shall be saved,’ and ‘he that believeth not shall be damned.’ Out of the abundance of the heart, the heralds of

* It is obvious that this prohibition is founded, not on incompetency of talent or piety, but on that becoming subjection, which the superior modesty of the female sex must ever esteem to be both a duty and privilege. This principle, however, has its bounds. Although ‘*it is a shame for women to speak in the church,*’ there is an assigned field of labour sufficiently extensive for the occupation of all their talents. Their services in the first churches are distinctly noticed and commended. They may habitually turn that influence, which a becoming deportment and affection always gives them over the other sex, into a holy channel. They may exhort and instruct in sacred truth, particularly their own sex, on innumerable occasions. Nor would it be incompatible with that subjection and modesty, which is their adornment, if a modest Priscilla should take an Apollos, and privately, in meekness, expound ‘unto him the way of God more perfectly.’

salvation proclaimed the joyful sound in every place ; in the synagogue, by the river, and way side. They were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which they knew was the power and wisdom of God to every one that believeth, though Greeks profaned and Jews blasphemed.

Brethren, if we wish to impart the vivifying beams of celestial light throughout a benighted world, let us return to the simplicity and purity of the apostolic churches. As the members of the church at Jerusalem, by using and improving their gifts in the church, which is Christ's college, were prepared to go forth to preach the word, (Acts viii. 4) so, now might thousands of missionaries be qualified for this glorious service ; and in the dark isles and gloomy continents, where superstition and idolatry spread their sable banners, the joyful acclamation would be raised, ' how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that publisheth salvation !'

OF SINGING PRAISES.

' By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruits of our lips, giving thanks to his name.' Heb. xiii. 15. ' In psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Eph. vi. 19, 20. ' In psalms, &c., singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord.' Col. iii. 16. ' I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.' 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

1. There is no divine ordinance, which approximates so near to the worship of the perfectly blessed, as that of praise. This was the peculiarly delightful employment of the sweet singer of Israel. This, too, is the high and animating privilege of the

redeemed on earth, and particularly of the churches of Christ. What a delightful theme for holy, grateful, and cheering song, does the glorious gospel of the blessed God present ! A theme which angelic choirs love to celebrate. ‘ And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders ; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto to him that sitteth on the throne ; and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.’ Rev. v. 11, 13.

2. The Scriptures of truth plainly teach us to worship the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom (he) has sent.’ The former, as the ‘ one God and Father of all ; of whom are all things :’ for whose ‘ pleasure all things are and were created ;’ ‘ who only hath immortality ;’ besides whom ‘ there is no God ;’ who will not give his glory (the glory of infinite and independent perfection) to another. The latter as the ‘ one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things,’—as ‘ the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God, by his blood ;’ as ‘ the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.’ ‘ At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*’*

3. While divine truth in general, and the Christian’s experience of that truth, are proper matter for Christian song, it is obvious that the perfections of Jehovah, and particularly his wondrous love to guilty perishing man, in the

* As several sentences here, are in this Edition omitted ; and, as a number of alterations, both in the collocation of words, and in some instances, of the words themselves, have been made elsewhere ; it will be proper, in the event of a new edition, to consult the original. In no case, of course, has the author’s meaning been changed.

unspeakable gift of his best beloved and only begotten Son, should be the principal theme of holy celebration in our grateful praise. Ought we not to sing more direct praise to God and the Lamb? The matchless doings of Jehovah formed the chief matter of the songs of God's prophets and people, in ancient times. So should our songs abound with blessing, and honour, and glory, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

4. As singing the praises of the Most High, is one of the spiritual sacrifices which believers *only* can offer, and a direct and solemn profession of holy faith and love;—as 'God is a spirit,' and must be worshipped 'in spirit and in truth;' and as 'the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord,'—these truths render the expostulation of the Almighty, to many modern religious societies, awfully appropriate. 'And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar, and ye say, wherein have we polluted thee?' 'Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?'

The apostolic command to the churches is, 'be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness; and what communion hath light with darkness?' 'Wherefore, come out from among them, and *be ye separate*, saith the Lord.' If there is any ordinance to which this solemn and imperative injunction applies, is it not applicable to that under consideration, in which we come into the immediate presence of the God of truth; professing that we believe in, love, and adore him? Why are any disqualified for membership in the spiritual temple? Is it not because they are disqualified to offer its spiritual sacrifices? The practice we reprove, implies

that the unsanctified are qualified to offer one of these sacrifices, which is as holy as any other. Why, then, are they refused membership? If they are qualified for this, why are they not for all?

False worshippers of old, were charged with the sin of lying unto God with their tongues, because 'their heart was not right with him.' Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37. In what view, then, must a jealous God consider the practice of his people, in encouraging such characters to offer their dead sacrifices, under the spiritual and purer dispensation? By what scripture, or reason, can we show, that we are not as much obliged to require some evidence of Christian character, in those whom we encourage to unite with us in this ordinance, as we are in those whom we receive to unite with us in the supper? Are not holy faith and love as essential to the former as to the latter? Is not the profession as positive and direct in the one case as in the other? Is it not even more so? Do we not more positively declare, 'I love thy kingdom, Lord.' 'Lord thou hast seen my soul sincere?'

Will it be said that the impenitent are not to be considered as making these professions when they sing? If so, this is sufficient proof of the impropriety of the practice, for every intelligent Christian knows, that to make such profession, is the very design of the appointment of this ordinance in the church. But on what principle do we say that it is not to be considered as implying a profession? We allow that it is so, in respect to the saints. Is it not so in respect to church members, who are only *nominal* Christians? Is it not manifestly so in respect to all, who unite their voices with the true worshippers? We might receive the impenitent to the Lord's supper, as some have done; and excuse ourselves by saying, we do not consider it as implying a profession of religion. The difference which many suppose exists between the two cases, is the effect of custom;

which is so infatuating, as to prevent many Christians from seeing the great evil of encouraging men to draw nigh unto God with their mouths, honouring him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him.

Will it be said, that when the choir or the congregation are invited, without discrimination, to engage in this ordinance, that they are invited to do so with right hearts? Now let us candidly examine this matter. On Lord's day morning, the pastor, expecting to meet his brethren at the Lord's table, discourses on the subject to the whole congregation. He faithfully states the qualifications requisite for an acceptable observance of it. He affectionately expresses his desire that all his hearers may, by true faith in the great Mediator, be prepared to participate in this privilege; and adds, that faithfulness to Christ and their own souls, requires him not to invite them to come, until they give evidence that they repent and believe. In perfect consistency with this, when the discourse is ended, he invites, not the whole congregation, but his Christian brethren only, to come to the table of the Lord.

In the afternoon, he discourses on the subject of singing to the praise of God. He faithfully states, in like manner, the qualifications requisite for the acceptable performance of this duty. He declares the necessity of holiness of heart; and that without this, the sacrifice is an abomination, and the profession a mockery. But instead of telling those who give no evidence of piety, as in the morning, that he cannot invite them to unite in the ordinance, until they manifest repentance and faith; he has no sooner ended these solemn declarations, than he invites them to do what he formerly assured them is, in their present character, an abomination to the Lord. Now we ask, whether is this distinction founded in truth, or in an antichristian custom? If the pastor is excused in the latter case, because he tells his hearers it is their duty to sing with the spirit, why

is he not equally excused if he invite them to the supper, with the caution to come in the exercise of faith ?

Will it be said that the supper is a *special* church ordinance ? Where, in the new Testament, do we learn this ? Or if we did, where do we find authority for unbelievers uniting in *any* ordinance of that kingdom, into which, eternal truth declares, they *cannot even enter* until born of water and of the Spirit ; and in which, we are assured, they have *no part*, while their heart is not right in the sight of God ?

Is it said there is both a positive requirement that we should discern the Lord's body, and a solemn declaration, that he that eateth unworthily eateth condemnation to himself ? So, we reply, have we a positive requirement to make melody in our heart unto the Lord when we sing his praise ; and the equally solemn declaration, that he ' will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.'

Men will resent the proffer from each other, of that which they presume to offer to the Almighty ! If a man, who is constantly and unrighteously opposing our interests, come to us with false professions of regard, do we not say, your pretensions are an abomination to me ; your hypocrisy I cannot away with, it is iniquity ?

How long, my brethren, shall we encourage the profanation of the name of the Most High, to gratify the ears of worms of the dust ?

We have no authority from the new Testament, to use musical instruments in the worship of the church. An appeal to the example of Jewish worship, in vindication of this innovation, will serve equally to justify the introduction of dancing. 2 Sam. vi. 14.

OF THE FELLOWSHIP OR CONTRIBUTION.

' And they continued stedfastly, in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship.' Acts ii. 42. ' For to their power, I bear record ;

yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.' 2 Cor. viii. 3, 4. 'As it is written, he hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the poor; for the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all.' 2 Cor. ix. 9, 13. 'Now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints; for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.' Rom. xv. 25, 26. 'But to do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifice God is well pleased.' Heb. xiii. 16.

The same Greek word, is in the above passages, translated *fellowship*, *contribution*, *distribution*, and *to communicate*. We understand, accordingly, all these passages as referring to the same subject.

Among the various blessed effects of the holy truth on the hearts of those who believe it, we contemplate with peculiar admiration, the spirit of love and benevolence. To this powerful spirit of mutual affection, and not to any positive law, we trace the community of goods, which prevailed to a considerable extent, for a short time, in the church at Jerusalem. That this was only a *temporary* voluntary arrangement, and not a positive law, or the practice of the first churches in general, appears from the following considerations:—

1. Peter said to Ananias, respecting his land, 'while it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?'

2. Paul writes to Timothy, who was to set things in order in the churches, 'if any man or woman that believeth have

widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged ; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.' If in the churches generally, there had been an entire community of goods, this direction would not only have been superfluous, but it would have been impracticable.

Christian love produces a fellowship or communion, not only in spiritual, but in temporal things; at least, so far as to excite us, cheerfully to impart to our poor brethren as they have need. To do good unto all men, and especially unto the household of faith as we have opportunity, is a positive revealed duty ; and an essential characteristic of a good steward of the manifold grace of God. 'Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him ?' 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.'

True love alone makes this duty a privilege and delight. It is in the exercise of this godlike benevolence, we find the verification of our Lord's words, '*it is more blessed to give than to receive.*' It is this which makes the cheerful giver, whom God loveth. The apostle enforces this duty by the same significant and beautiful figurative illustration he employs when enforcing the use of gifts. 'If one member suffers, all suffer with it ; if one is honoured, all rejoice.' Blessed spirit of sympathy and love ! What a scene would this world of selfishness present, were this spirit universally to prevail ! Alas ! how little does it yet prevail even in the churches !

This duty is enforced, too, by the most affecting example. 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor ; that ye through his poverty might be rich.'

Benevolent Redeemer ! breathe upon us thine own spirit of love, that it may again be said of Christian churches, neither was there any among them that lacked.*

OF FASTING

‘When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites.’ Matt. vi. 16. ‘Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast.’ Mark ii. 19, 20. ‘As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.’ Acts xiii. 2, 3. ‘And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting.’ Acts xiv. 23. ‘That ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer.’ 1 Cor. vii. 5.

A temporary abstinence from food, as a religious duty, has been practised by the people of God in all ages. The holy prophets, and the children of Israel, on special occasions, such as the righteous judgments of the Almighty, or when they were sensible of their departures from him, humbled themselves, and fasted before the Lord. Fasting was observed also, by the first churches on important occasions, such as the appointment or ordination of elders. Acts xiv. 23. As, also, when persons were sent out from the churches, to preach the word of life to perishing men. Acts xiii. 2, 3. We learn, too, that it is the occasional duty of individuals. See 1 Cor. vii. 5.

* To show that the writer’s view of the term ‘fellowship,’ in Acts ii. 42, is not a *novel* one, he quotes Burkitt’s commentary on the passage. ‘Mutual assistance which they gave and received, a communication of free distribution to the necessities of each other; they did by love serve one another, and parted with their possessions for the support of each other.’

Although we ought ever to be clothed with humility, and have constant need to confess our sins before God, seeking his forgiving love in the name of Jesus; fasting is not a stated duty, but is to be attended to as the providence of God, the particular state of the church or of individual Christians, may require. Our Lord directs us to avoid all unnecessary publicity, while attending to this duty; that we ‘appear not unto men to fast, but unto [our] Father, which is in secret.’ When observed with discretion, it is manifestly conducive both to physical and spiritual health.

It is not the province of civil governors to appoint fasts, or, in any manner, to direct or regulate the time of divine worship. Even if it were, the constant and formal appointment of days for special fasting and thanksgiving, without any variation conformable to the providences of the Almighty, must be acknowledged to be objectionable, by every one who has a scriptural knowledge of this duty.

OF DISCIPLINE.

‘Do ye not judge them that are within? Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person.’ 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive him. Wherefore, I beseech you, that ye would confirm your love towards him.’ 2 Cor. ii. 6, 8. ‘Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ Gal. vi. 1. ‘Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.’ James v. 19, 20.

As the Christian church is a holy communion, and as the unrighteous have no part in the kingdom of God, the faithful observance of the ordinance of discipline, is absolutely essential to its true character.*

Some maintain it is an assumption of authority to exercise church discipline. But such would do well to consider, whether it be not an assumption of authority, to set aside the King's laws, receiving and retaining in Christian churches, those whom the Master will not have there? An unscriptural severity of discipline is indeed an assumption of authority, of serious and evil consequence. But an unscriptural laxity is no less an evil. We have no laws to make. We have only to obey those which we find in the inspired statutes. If, in enforcing these laws, any complain, their complaint is against the King.

As the Scriptures of truth assure us, that 'the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,' and that 'except a man be born again, he cannot see it,' we are as plainly instructed that such persons ought to be excluded, as that they ought not to have been received. He who is not fit to *enter* the kingdom, is surely not fit to *remain* there. To retain a person when the evidence against his character is decisive, is as much a false profession on the part of the church, as on the part of the individual. The church, in such a case, professes to receive and love him as a member of the spiritual body of Christ, when it believes the contrary. It thus testifies falsely to the world concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom. Surely if, in any case, that question of fearful rebuke, '*will ye act deceitfully for God?*' be appropriate, it is peculiarly so in this. Nor is this all. The individual, who is the proper subject of

* Some misunderstand our Lord's words, 'Let both grow together until the harvest. (Matt. xiii. 30,) by not attending to his own explanation; 'the field is the world,' not the church.

righteous discipline, is deprived of the divinely appointed means for his reformation and salvation. Of whom, then, will his blood be required ?

OF PRIVATE OFFENCES.

‘ If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.’ Matt xviii. 15, 17.

How the divine wisdom and goodness of our blessed Master shine forth in these directions ! What an incalculable amount of reproach to the Christian name ; of strife and animosity among brethren ; and of perplexing labour in the churches, would the observance of these precepts have prevented ! Our *first* duty in the case of a private offence, is abundantly plain. Before a word on the subject is uttered to another, go to thy brother, not in the spirit of domineering accusation, but of meek and affectionate entreaty ; and, in all the faithfulness of love, tell him his fault ‘ between thee and him alone.’ Consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted ; and humbly and earnestly endeavour to restore and gain thy brother. Overcome evil with good.

Have we not reason to believe, that failure in the first act is often to be attributed, as much to the improper spirit and manner of the offended, as to the obstinacy of the offender ? How often, also, has this divine rule been violated, and the offender, instead of being restored, excited to sin more, by the individual offended divulging the matter first to others, and that in an exaggerated manner ?

If our brother be not gained by the first prescribed act, we are still to keep the matter secret, and, 'taking one or two more' with us, to tell him his fault again. If he hear them, the matter ends there, and is not to be communicated to any one else. But if this fail, we are to 'tell it unto the church.' And if he neglect to hear the church, our fellowship with him as a Christian is to cease. Yet even then, we are not released from the obligation of endeavouring to restore the wretched wanderer to the fold of Christ. From the decision of the church, our Lord allows of no appeal to any council, or tribunal on earth.

OF PUBLIC OFFENCES.

'Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.'
1 Tim. v. 20.

It is obvious that the honour of Christ, and the holy character of his church require, that in all cases of public offences, the discipline, whatever it may be, should be public. Not more so, however, than the offence. If an offence be committed in presence of any particular number of persons, and such confession and reparation made at once, as the word of God demands, the knowledge of the offence ought not to extend beyond those persons. This, the spirit of our Lord's directions requires. But if, by any means, the knowledge of the offence should extend beyond the first company, the confession, if possible, must be equally extensive.

That in all cases where offences are publicly committed or known, public discipline is requisite, is manifest from the apostle instructing the Corinthian church to put away the incestuous person when they were gathered together, which we are certainly to understand as referring to their stated meeting on the first day of the week; and we learn, that from this meet-

ing unbelievers were not excluded. 1 Cor. xiv. 23. We have no scriptural authority for excluding any one from observing this ordinance. To do so, would be putting our light under a bushel. Christian churches ought to manifest to all, that they have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Private church meetings for the execution of discipline, are alike unscriptural and injurious to the cause of Christ. Whatever means may be used in investigating a case and preparing it for a decision, the execution of discipline, whether rebuke and confession, or exclusion, be requisite, ought to be as public as any other ordinance of the church. Thus alone, will the holiness of God's house be manifested to all.

The honour of Christ, as well as the peace and unity of a church, require that its members should, in cases of discipline, act in concert. The apostle directed *the church* at Corinth, not *the elders*, to put away the incestuous person. It is, indeed, the duty of elders to preside at this, and every other ordinance; but the whole church are to act. The apostle represents the punishment of the incestuous person, (2 Cor. ii. 6.) to have been inflicted of many.

The purity of Christ's house requires discipline to be observed on the first day of the week. It may happen, that on Lord's day morning, a brother is found totally unworthy of a place in the church. How, in such a case, can the church hold fellowship with him, when he is known by all to be a wicked person? If the case be doubtful, the church indeed cannot proceed to put him away, but if the charge be substantiated, the execution of discipline will occupy but a few minutes.

We learn from the apostolic direction to the Corinthian church, (2 Cor. ii. 6, 8.) the duty of forgiving, and receiving back to our fellowship, all penitent offenders. Our Lord requires us to do this, seventy times seven; and assures us, that if we do not, from the heart, forgive our brethren their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us.

ON LOVE, UNION AND FORBEARANCE.

‘A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.’ John xiii. 34. ‘And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.’ Acts 4, 32. ‘Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.’ Phil. ii. 2. ‘And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.’ Col. iii. 14. ‘Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.’ Phil. iv. 21. ‘Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.’ 1 Cor. i. 10. ‘I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one immersion, one God and Father of all; who is above all, and through all, and in you all.’ Eph. iv. 1, 6. ‘Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.’ Rom. xiv. 1. ‘Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.’ Rom. xv. 7.

The true bond of the Christian churches is holy love. This affection is founded in the eternal truth of the gospel. The disciples of Jesus love one another for the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in them, and shall be in them for ever. ‘And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence

till the day of Christ.' While founded in truth, it is *a union of hearts*; and without this, uniformity of opinion avails nothing. This heaven-born charity, which constitutes the felicity of all the holy hosts, has united, in one indissoluble bond, the Gentile and the Jew, the polite and the rude, the prince and the peasant. This is the vital principle of the one body. It is this which unites all the members of that one body to the Head, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. God is love: and 'he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.'

While, in imitation of our Father in heaven, we are to exercise benevolent affection towards all men, even to our enemies, we ought to cherish a peculiar love of complacency towards all who bear the image of the Redeemer. How different is Christian from sectarian love. The latter is contracted and selfish. The former is a pure principle, flowing spontaneously from the holy heart towards all the redeemed family; and resting most copiously on those, of whatever name, who bear most of the image of the perfect Saviour. It is an *operative* principle: true Christians 'love not in word and in tongue' only, 'but in deed and in truth.' It was the practical exhibition of this principle, that excited, in the early and purer ages of the church, the exclamation, 'See how these Christians love one another!' The happy subjects of this affection bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. It is this which unites 'the babes,' 'the young men,' and the 'fathers;' blessing them all with sweet fellowship, and exciting them to harmonious co-operation in the service of their one Master, until they all come, 'in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,' in him.

To 'grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ,' i. e. of the truth of Jesus, is the constant duty and privilege

of his disciples. For this he offered his supplication to his Father ; and for this he offered his life on the cross. ' For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.' The church is the school of Christ. Jesus is the teacher and master. If we will know no other, we shall make happy progress in heavenly knowledge. Our union in the truth will be continually increasing, until ' we know even as also we are known.'

The inspired apostles, imbibing the spirit of their Saviour, prayed, laboured, and suffered to promote the perfect union of the one body in the truth. They were often grieved by the divisions and dissensions of the disciples. To the apprehension of any inaction or dead formality, resulting from their all speaking the same thing, and being perfectly united together in the same judgment concerning the things of the kingdom, they were utter strangers. They lived and died to promote this union. O that we may have divine favour to imitate their example ! Beloved brethren, let us turn away from darkness unto light ; from all the creeds, covenants, and standards of fallible men, to the most holy testimony, even to that word ' which liveth and abideth for ever.' Then, like lines in a circle, as we approximate towards the sun of righteousness, the centre of truth, we shall approximate towards each other.

The duty of aiming at perfect union in the truth, is perfectly consistent with the divine precept to receive the weak in the faith, and to forbear one another in love. We are commanded to receive one another, as Christ also received us. How, then, has Christ received us ? Not as perfect in knowledge and obedience, but as his true and willing disciples, who desire to know and do the will of his Father. We assume the prerogative of Zion's King, if we make *more* essential to membership in his church than he has made : we rob him of that prerogative, if we make *less*.

As the apostle speaks of the *strong* as having knowledge, it is obvious, that by the *weak*, we are to understand those, who, in some respects, are ignorant or erroneous.

Two reasons are assigned for receiving each other, and for forbearing one another in Christian love :—

1. God hath received us.
2. What we do, we do unto the Lord.

It is important to observe, that the apostle enjoins mutual forbearance, not because the errors of the weak were small, in comparison with other errors considered fundamental; but because God had received them, and because what they did, they did unto the Lord. The first principle would have been one of very difficult application, and it is a remarkable fact, that they who adopt it, have never been agreed how far to extend it. The second principle is of easy application. It requires us to receive all who appear to have been received of the Lord, unless he has made an exception.

It is the practice of some churches of immersed disciples to make, what we apprehend to be, a most unwarrantable and pernicious distinction, between different errors. They make some of these, which they deem not fundamental, matters of forbearance, and others, they will not. Now we ask, do the Scriptures recognize this distinction? Does the inspired apostle give the least intimation of such a distinction, when teaching the nature and ground of Christian forbearance? Is not this, in fact, one of the innumerable corrupt offspring of the creeds of human tradition, which have been allowed most profanely to thrust out from the sanctuary, the law of the Lord, and to sever the one body, into which ‘by one Spirit’ we have been immersed? 1 Cor. xii. 13. To require the babe in Christ, to understand and give assent to all the articles of a human formulary, some of

which, even the fathers can with difficulty digest, and to make this a condition of receiving him into the church, is no less preposterous, than for a mother to refuse her infant the breast, or a father to exclude it from the family, because it cannot eat strong meat ? To require the new convert to subscribe to, he knows not what, is still worse. The church is the school of Christ. What should we think of a schoolmaster, refusing to receive a little boy desirous to learn, into his school, because he did not know as much as some young men who had been under instruction for years ?

The scriptural doctrine of forbearance is in perfect harmony with truth. ‘Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth.’ Although we are required to receive the weak or erroneous, whom God hath received, because they do what they do unto the Lord ; i. e. because they are not *wilfully* disobedient, sincerity alters not the nature of error ; nor does it render it innocent, where the means of knowing better are possessed. Our errors are to be attributed, not to the ambiguity of the word of the Lord, which would be an impeachment of divine wisdom and goodness, but to our own prejudice and imperfection. While the disciples of Jesus are to forbear one another in love, in respect to matters in which they are not agreed, and harmoniously to unite in the things in which they are of one mind ; forbearance requires no such violation of truth, or neglect of duty, as is implied in our uniting in anything we believe to be wrong, or in neglecting to do what we understand to be right. Matters of indifference, or which have no moral character, such as meats, &c., which, if we eat, we are not the better ; and if we eat not, we are not the worse, are an exception to this rule. In such cases, and in such only, we are required to abstain from acting according to our own opinion ; and this, for the sake of our weak brother, lest we cause him, by our example, to offend and do

that which he considers wrong; 'for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.'

It is a plain and important principle, that whatever others believe and practice, we must serve the Lord, by believing what we understand to be his truth, and by obeying whatever we understand him to command. This, however, we are to do in humility and forbearance, remembering that we see now as through a glass darkly, and know but in part.

There is an important difference between proving any doctrine or ordinance to be *true*, and proving it to be *essential* to membership in the Christian church. This difference has been too much overlooked. If the belief of every doctrine, and the practice of every ordinance of truth, be essential to membership, *perfection* is essential. Perfection is a duty, for it is a command. We know, however, that it is not essential to membership. Paul himself had not attained to it when he wrote to his brethren.

OF ELDERS, OR BISHOPS.

'And when they had ordained them **ELDERS** in every church, and had prayed with fasting.' Acts xiv. 23. 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee; if any be blameless, for a bishop must be blameless.' Titus i. 5, 7. 'The elders which are among you, I exhort, feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.' 1 Peter v. 1, 3. 'A bishop then must be blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, patient, not covetous; one that ruleth well in his own house,

not a novice.' 'Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without.' 'Obey them which have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.' Heb. xiii. 17. 'Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, 'thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his reward.' 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.

From these passages we learn :—

1. That the terms *elder* and *bishop* are descriptive of the same office. See Titus i. 5, 7.

2. That the bishop's office extends but to one church. This is evident from the fact that they ordained them elders (or bishops) 'in every church:' (Acts xiv. 23) and 'in every city.' Titus i. 5, 7. That there was but one church in a city, is evident from the apostolic addresses to the church, not churches at Rome, Ephesus, &c. There is not a single precept or example, authorizing the ordination of a bishop over a plurality of churches. Instead of this, we very plainly learn :—

3. That they had a plurality of elders or bishops in the same church. We read of the elders of the church at Jerusalem, (Acts xv. 4) of the church at Ephesus, (Acts xx. 17) and that elders were ordained in every church. Acts xiv. 23. 'Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church.' James v. 14. It is incontrovertible, that a presbytery in each church, is a divine institution, and that it is the duty of all Christian churches to appoint a plurality of elders as soon as practicable. In this provision, we may discern the wisdom and goodness of the ascended Saviour. The arduous and various duties of this office, in a church of numerous members, cannot be adequately discharged by an

individual. While all elders ought to possess, in some degree, the requisite qualifications, one will be more eminent in some particular gift than another. This we are taught in the passage, 'let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, (or support) especially they that labour in word and doctrine.' Although all elders must be apt to teach, some will excel, and consequently, it is the duty of such to labour particularly in word and doctrine; while others may excel in some other useful qualification. The harmonious co-operation of these various gifts, conduces to the edification of the church. No church of numerous members, is properly or scripturally organized without a plurality of bishops. To all objections, however plausible, which may be offered in opposition to this, or any other divine institute, it is sufficient to reply, 'what is the chaff to the wheat?'

4. We are taught the requisite qualifications of a bishop or elder. He 'must be blameless.' He must be a holy man, possessing and manifesting the pure spirit, and practising the sacred precepts of that word which he preaches unto others. He must be an example to the flock; otherwise, he profanes his office, whatever may be his attainments.

He must have knowledge of the word and doctrine of the Lord. The word of truth and life must dwell in him richly in all wisdom. He must not be 'a novice' or new convert. The neglect of the churches, to encourage the use of all their various gifts of teaching and exhortation, has led to the evil of thrusting into the elder's office exhorters who are not 'apt to teach,' and teachers who do not possess the other qualifications requisite.

He must be '*apt to teach.*' In addition to possessing a knowledge of the truth, he must have a talent for communicating it in an edifying manner. A knowledge of the word of God in his own tongue, and an ability to communicate, to ex-

plain, and enforce it, are all that is essential in respect to learning. Whatever advantage may be derived from the knowledge of other languages, and of the sciences in general, it is adding to the word of God to make such knowledge *essential* to the elder's office. He who possesses the scriptural qualifications plainly described in 1 Tim. chap. iii. is worthy of it, although he may be ignorant of heathen classics and dead languages. It has a plausible appearance of promoting the advantage of gospel churches, to insist on the necessity of a learned ministry; but in reality, it disqualifies those who are here marked out for office by the Holy Spirit. The invariable effect which this principle has hitherto had, and which it is still likely to produce, is to diminish the importance of the qualifications which are absolutely required. It will ever have a tendency to appoint to office learned men, or at least those who have gone through the forms of learning, in preference to those who possess the pastoral qualifications in a much superior degree.

Experience has proved, that men who cannot be called learned, have made able and excellent bishops; many of them, indeed, much superior in usefulness and general ability, to others who have excelled in learning.

5. In the word of truth, we learn the official duties of a bishop.

Bishops are not appointed in the Christian churches because they are essential, either to the existence of a church or to the observance of ordinances. They are appointed for the edification of the churches; and that all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord may be observed in a more perfect manner: as a governor is appointed in a state, not because the people have not a right to their civil privileges without him, but that, in consequence of such appointment, they may enjoy them better.

The opinion that the disciples have no right to observe some of the ordinances without an elder, has no foundation in Scripture or reason. The right of disciples to immersion and the Lord's Supper, is no more necessarily connected with the elder's office, than the right of the citizens of the state of Connecticut to enjoy their civil liberties, is necessarily connected with the office of governor. The right, in both cases, exists antecedent to the official appointments. What makes the deacon's office necessary? It is not because money cannot be collected and distributed before deacons are appointed; but, because the poor will not be so properly attended to, if there be no one to attend to this particular duty. Why, then, should the church want the ordinances of the Lord Jesus, till they obtain stated pastors. Neither the design, nor the nature, nor the importance of the pastoral office requires this; nor does analogy to the nature of office in general require it. If it be required then, it must be by the express authority of the Lord Jesus. But as no such authority is to be found, no such restriction can be lawful. How unreasonable is it to lay it down as an axiom, that the necessity and importance of the pastoral office require that there should be certain ordinances which depend upon it; and then, without any authority from Scripture, to set about drawing a line of distinction, showing what may, and what may not be attended to by a church without pastors. This is surely to interpose the authority of man, in the room of the authority of the Lord Jesus. If a church without pastors may observe one ordinance, they may observe all, if none be excepted. When attending to any ordinance, there must be some one to preside. Why should it be lawful for a person to preside in one ordinance, and not in another? What is there extraordinary in the supper? The holiness of the ordinance cannot make the distinction, for all God's ordinances are equally holy. Order cannot forbid churches without

pastors to attend to this ordinance, for order is as much concerned in every other ordinance. To preside at this ordinance is not peculiarly difficult ; it is, by no means, so much so, as at most cases of discipline. Can one pray on other occasions, and not be able to give thanks for the bread and cup ?

But though a church is not prevented from enjoying any of the ordinances, on account of wanting a bishop, it wants much, when it wants official oversight and teaching. The official duties devolving on the bishop, are highly important :—

He is to ‘ feed the church of the Lord,’ with the bread of life, the holy truth of God’s word, by which the redeemed are sanctified and prepared for the service and enjoyment of their Lord. With this word of truth, he is to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, to confirm the wavering, to strengthen the weak, to animate the slothful, and to warn the unruly. He is to preach, not himself, nor his own imaginations, but ‘ Christ Jesus the Lord,’ considering himself a servant of the church for Jesus’ sake.

He is to watch for souls as one who must give an account ; considering those to whom he may, by divine favour, be instrumental of spiritual and eternal advantage, as his joy and crown. For this important purpose he must, as a faithful shepherd, know the condition of the flock ; he must continually acquaint himself with the spiritual state of those, for whose edification and salvation he labours, that like a wise servant, he may know how to give to each a portion in due season.

He is to rule the church according to the laws of Christ. He has no legislative power. He is only to enforce the laws of the King, which are all to be found in the new Testament. Faithful to his high calling, he is constantly to maintain, in unison with his brethren, that holy discipline, which is essential to the character of the church of God.

As a minister of the living God, and an occupant of the highest and most important office which man can sustain on earth, he is to perform all these duties, with all that holy solicitude, disinterested love, and untiring patience, which the glory of God, the value of souls, and the tremendous retributions of eternity, are fitted to inspire.

6. In respect to the ordination or appointment of elders, we read that the apostles ordained 'elders in every church,' (Acts xiv. 23) and that Titus, who had authority from the apostle to set things in order in the churches, was directed to ordain elders in every city. Titus i. 5. Apostles and evangelists have no successors. They were extraordinary officers. No living man can justly claim authority to set things in order in the churches. The apostles are now directing us. They being dead, yet speak in the holy word. That bishops were ordained over a single church, is evident from their duties being confined to that church. As it is their duty to preside at all ordinances in the particular church of which they are overseers, so it is their duty to preside at the ordination of all other officers, whether deacons or elders. But here is their boundary. We find no authority in the new Testament, for elders appointing or ordaining officers in other churches. Saul and Barnabas were set apart to the work of going forth to declare the glad tidings, by the *teachers* in that church of which they were members. Acts xiii. It was doubtless 'the presbytery' of the church to which Timothy belonged, that laid hands on him. 1 Tim. iv. 14.

The right of choosing officers, is somewhere; as it is *not* out of the church, it must be *in* it. 'Why,' asks a sensible writer, 'may not a church, destitute of bishops, appoint certain of their own number to act in the formal ordination of its office-bearers, as well as formally to admit, rebuke, or exclude members? There would be the same propriety in sending for

foreign presbyters to do the latter, as there is in sending for such to ordain office-bearers. Bishops have no power out of their own churches. Nothing which they do abroad can be considered as done in right of office. A church can appoint persons, according to the will of the Lord Jesus, to do all things belonging to the bishop's office in itself; but it cannot give them power to do similar things in any other church. As one church has no right to choose office-bearers for another church, so neither have the bishops of one church a right to ordain them. Ordination by persons belonging to the church itself, appears strange to many, only because they have been long accustomed to clerical ordination. It is rational, however, and agreeable to analogy in the conferring of office, even in temporal things. When one king receives his crown from another, it implies vassalage. I am persuaded, if the Prince of Wales lives to succeed to the crown, he will rather have it placed upon his head by some of his own subjects, than by the greatest of potentates. The nation, on such an occasion, will not find it necessary to seek the co-operation of the emperors of the north and south. If a church possesses the right of choosing officers, must it not possess also the right of attending to that ceremony, which is the instituted expression of that choice? It is an important principle, that it is the duty and privilege of each church to obey the laws and enjoy the advantages of the heavenly kingdom, without the control or interference of any other church, or presbytery, or council, or synod, or pope.

Of the unhallowed causes which have conduced to the corruption of the churches, from the simplicity of Christ, none have exceeded the pride and presumption of a dominant clergy. To the discredit of their profession, these lords over God's heritage, have robbed the disciples of the liberty where-with Christ has made them free, and set themselves far above the sphere assigned to Christian bishops in the new Testa-

tament. There is not an ordinance of Jesus which their pride and covetousness have not more or less perverted. Alas! how has the beautiful simplicity of the Christian institutes been thus marred. Most arrogantly assuming the exclusive right of administering Christian ordinances in all circumstances, they have persuaded the unthinking multitude, that their presence and ministration were absolutely essential to an acceptable observance of them. Happy would it be, my brethren, if this darkness were past, and if the true light were now generally diffused and enjoyed. But it is far otherwise. By the continued prevalence, to a considerable extent, of this unscriptural assumption, Christians are deprived of their rightful privileges, and their Lord of their obedience.

7. The apostolic word teaches us the duty of the churches towards their elders.

‘We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their works sake.’
 ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.’

The constant solicitude and arduous labours of those, who, from pure Christian motives, engage in this ‘good work,’ call for the affectionate sympathies, the grateful esteem, the fervent prayers, and willing subjection of all for whose spiritual welfare they labour. An accusation against them is not to be received, ‘but before two or three witnesses.’ It is the duty of the brethren to confirm by their exhortations, the truth and importance of that ‘word and doctrine,’ in which the elders are enjoined especially to labour; as also to establish by their co-operation, that government and discipline, which it is the official duty of bishops to see maintained.

It is also the plainly revealed duty of the churches to communicate of their carnal things, to those who minister to

them in spiritual things, according to their ability, and the need of those who are over them in the Lord. It may be impracticable in some cases now, as we learn it was at Ephesus, for churches to support entirely the elders by their contributions. But the apostle Paul's injunction, which he enforces by his own example is, in such cases, too plain to be misunderstood. He does not instruct the church at Ephesus to have only one elder, in order that they may be able to support entirely him and his family. Nor does he direct the Ephesian elders to look out for office elsewhere, that they may procure larger salaries : but in the spirit of disinterested love, he says, 'I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that *so labouring*, ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.' Elders may occupy very useful stations, where their brethren are not in circumstances to admit of fully supporting them. Pride and luxury are a disgrace to the elders' office ; but it is not at all incompatible with its true dignity, to follow some useful business, in order to provide, in whole or in part, for themselves and those of their household. A Christian bishop, and a lord in lawn, are very different characters. It is to be remembered, moreover, that lawfully engaging in secular business for a livelihood, and pursuing such business with the covetous desire to lay up treasures on earth, are objects so different as to constitute conduct of a very different moral quality. It is unquestionably desirable, when practicable, that bishops should give themselves wholly to the work of their important office.

OF DEACONS.

'There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily

ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men, of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.' Acts vi. 1, 3. 'Paul, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' Phil. i. 1.

We here learn that the official duty of a deacon, is to take care of the poor of the church. From deacons being appointed in the churches generally, and from their qualifications being particularly described along with those of bishops, it is evident that the office was not a mere temporary arrangement, arising out of the peculiar circumstances of the church at Jerusalem. The divine wisdom and goodness in instituting it as a permanent office, plainly appear from the fact, that the poor we have always with us. That Christian love which cements the spiritual body, manifests itself in supplying the wants of Christ's members; many of whom, though rich in faith, are poor in this world. It is the duty of all the favoured recipients of the divine bounty to do good to all men, and especially to the household of faith: the labour of love, of distributing to every man according to his necessities, is the special duty of Christian deacons.

Deacons ought to be 'grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.' We are taught that they must 'first be proved;' and that then, they may 'use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.'

There is a peculiar blessing connected with the faithful discharge of the duties of this office. 'For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus.'

We learn, it is the duty of *the brethren* to select deacons ; (Acts vi. 13) and that they are to be set apart for their work by the laying on of the hands of the elders of the church. If a church be destitute of pastors, some of the brethren may be appointed to discharge this service. The laying on of the hands of the apostles was sometimes attended with the communication of miraculous gifts ; but the ceremony now, can be considered only as a solemn sign of being set apart to a particular work. That it is proper to practise this, although the miraculous gifts have ceased, appears from the fact that the laying on of hands was not exclusively an apostolic act, and that it was practised as a sign of setting apart to a particular office or work, when no miraculous gift was imparted. Acts xiii. 1, 3.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

‘ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers : for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communication hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ?’

While the benevolent spirit of the gospel requires us to imitate our Father in heaven who is good to all, imparting his mercies to the unthankful and the evil ; the holy spirit of the heavenly kingdom, as well as its imperative precepts, prohibit all alliance of the friends and enemies of God in the things which pertain to the Christian community. The first and indispensable requisite to any participation in the privileges of this community, is reconciliation to the holy truth. No speculative knowledge, no fair moral exterior, no mere profession, can reverse the decree of truth :—‘ thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter ; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.’

Alas ! how long have the house of the Lord and his ordi-

nances been profaned and made the scoff of the infidel, by the preposterous alliance of the friends and enemies of the Lord Jesus, under the pretence of advancing his cause. Who ever heard of an earthly kingdom forming an alliance with another kingdom, while warring against each other? There is now war in heaven, respecting the church of Christ: Michael and his angels, and the devil and his angels, are in hostile array and determined conflict. All the carnally minded, whatever may be their professions or their hopes, are the messengers of Satan, and in voluntary allegiance to him against the Messiah. For the subjects of the holy kingdom to form an alliance with any of these, is surely treason, (though it be not always so understood) against the King of Zion and his cause.

The opinion so prevalent, that an association of believers and unbelievers is so far justifiable, because worldly men can properly attend to *the temporal* concerns of the church, is not merely unwarranted by any Scriptural precept or example, but is a violation of both. The apostolic precept, as well as the examples of the first churches, require that men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, be appointed for this purpose. Acts vi. 3. And every reflecting mind must perceive that it requires spiritual discernment, as well as superior judgment, to make such an arrangement of the temporal concerns of the church, as shall comport with the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel. Modern Sanballats and Tobiahs are saying 'let us build with you,' and some of Christ's followers give their consent, forgetting that all who in heart are unsubjected to the King, 'have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.' Worldly men, whether professors or not, will never build according to the holy pattern. They make void the commandments of God, by their traditions. They profane the sanctuary of the Lord by their un-

hallowed innovations. They are Achans in the camp, and prevent the advancement of the redeemed towards the high and blessed attainment of standing 'perfect and complete in all the will of God.' How is it possible, in the nature of things, for the church, with such an incubus, to travel, with joyful alacrity, the celestial road? How can the carnal and the spiritual go in harmony, without a sacrifice of truth on the part of the latter? 'How can two walk together except they be agreed? 'What fellowship hath light with darkness?' Is it not an incontrovertible fact, that such incongruous confederacies, are to be traced to a departure on the part of the Lord's people, from the purity and simplicity of the new Testament; and that it is by the prevalence of the same spirit of worldly conformity they are still maintained? Every candid and intelligent Christian must acknowledge, that, as in the case of the ancient Israelites, such unscriptural associations, instead of conforming the world to Christians, have conformed Christians to the world. If this be not going into mystical Babylon, and committing spiritual fornication, we have yet to learn what doing so means. O brethren! hear the word of the Lord; for Zion's sake, and for the sake of the souls of perishing men, hear it, for love's sake, we beseech you, 'COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE, THAT YE BE NOT PARTAKERS OF HER SINS, AND THAT YE RECEIVE NOT OF HER PLAGUES.'

The means which infinite wisdom has appointed to promote the cause of truth, must be best. 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.' Let us cease to impeach that wisdom and goodness, by adding our vain imaginations to the holy oracles. The church is competent to attend to all its concerns, whether spiritual or temporal. We have shown that the disciples of Jesus are under divine obligation to attend to both, in order that all things may be done in the spirit and order of the

holy kingdom. They need no man's money to build costly edifices, bearing a false testimony respecting the religion of the humble Saviour. Nor are they justifiable in resorting to any unscriptural methods of obtaining what they actually need. Alas! how prone are we to deceive ourselves, and to gratify 'the lust of the eye and the pride of life,' under the specious pretence of honouring the Almighty! Is it consistent, brethren, with the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel of Christ;—is it consistent with our professed love to the souls of the heathen;—is it consistent with our begging the pittance of the labouring man, to put into the treasury of the Lord, to expend ten thousand dollars in useless ornaments on a single house for worshipping HIM, who we are assured, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but in the hearts of the humble and contrite, however unassuming the place of their assembling?

We know the vain pleas which are urged to shield carnality and pride from just reproof. My brethren, will these pleas avail us in that hour when our real motives will be exposed without disguise? From those who have no conscience in these matters, we can hope for no reform. It is to such as acknowledge themselves 'stewards of the manifold favour of God,' and who feel their responsibility, that we present this subject for solemn reflection.

While the divine precepts respecting the temporal support of elders and preachers, authorize the churches to claim such support from disciples *only*, and require us to preach the gospel freely to the world; and while these precepts, as well as the nature of that kingdom which is not of this world, forbid the combinations we have condemned, we have Scriptural authority, (Acts xxviii. 10) for gratefully accepting voluntary contributions from men in general. We are under obligation not only to treat them courteously, but to encourage them, by every lawful means both to hear the joyful sound, and to witness

the redeemed of the Lord, observing the ordinances of his worship ; and we are to pray and labour on their behalf, if, by any *righteous* means, we may save their souls from death. Constantly exhibiting the meek and humble spirit of our divine Master, and breathing towards all, the same temper of love we are to manifest to them, that it is in the fear of God we maintain the holy separation, enjoined by his own indispensable word, and not in that pharisaical spirit which says, ‘stand by for I am holier than thou.’

OF TITLES.

‘The Scribes and Pharisees love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market, and to be called of men, *rabbi*. But be ye not called *rabbi* : for one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren. He that is greatest among you, shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.’ Matt. xxiii. 1, 11.

It is truly affecting to reflect how the above precept has hitherto been, and still is, violated by many of the professed followers of the *meek and lowly* Saviour. The title of ‘*reverend*’ is, in the Bible, exclusively appropriated to the Most High. ‘Holy and reverend is his name.’ Does it then, become worms of the dust to assume it ? It is generally admitted that *rabbi* and *doctor*, are corresponding titles.* Is not then, the giving and receiving of the latter, a manifest violation of the precept of Jesus Christ ? While we thus act, what must infidels think of our professions of humility ? Must it not tend to confirm them in their fatal opposition to

* See Campbell’s Dissertations.

the gospel of Christ, to hear his professed followers giving one another the flattering titles of *reverend*, *right reverend*, *father in God*, &c. If the giving and receiving of these titles be consistent with the spirit and precepts of the humble Saviour, what, in the whole department of antichrist, is not? Peter thought it sufficient to speak of an inspired apostle, by the appellation of 'our beloved brother Paul.' The reason why he did not style him *reverend*, we may readily conceive was, because, like Mary, he had learned at *Jesus' feet*. Who is there, that has been instructed in the same school, that would prefer the title of *reverend doctor*, to that of *beloved brother*? Is it consistent to say that we love simplicity when we accept these titles?

OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PERFECT OBEDIENCE TO
THE WORD OF GOD.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

To OBEY is better than sacrifice, and to HEARKEN than the fat of rams.' 1 Sam. xv. 22.

'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto ALL thy commandments.' Psalm cxix. 6.

'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Rev. xxii. 14.

'Ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.' Mark vii. 9.

The great Protestant maxim is, THE BIBLE, THE BIBLE IS OUR ONLY RULE. But alas! how much popery still exists

among Protestants! Protestants, indeed, do not avow the right to the chair of St. Peter, But what is the difference between such an avowal, and claiming a right, on the ground of expediency and change of times, to deviate from the practice of the first churches founded on apostolic precept? It will be soon enough to talk about successors to the apostles, when the apostles have ceased to rule. They have the very same authority now to rule by their word, in all the churches of christendom, as they had authority to rule personally, in the churches of Galatia. The difference between Papists and many Protestants seems to consist, in the former more boldly avowing, and carrying out to a greater extent, the principle of usurpation of the King's authority. Christians will never be united in truth until they wholly abandon this principle. The views of fallible minds concerning what is expedient, are as changeable as the wind. Until we are willing to practise on the great maxim of implicit deference to Scripture, we can no more expect to be united in our Lord's kingdom, than we could expect to meet in the same port, were we to put to sea in different vessels without helm or compass.

The dissenters left the church of England on the principles we advocate. They were of opinion that these principles not only justified, but required their separation. To Scripture they appealed, and on its declarations they rested their defence against the same charges of schism and disorganization, which the Papists had urged against their opponents. The Baptists on the same principle separated from the Presbyterians and Congregationalists: and, in like manner we have separated from the Baptists. But on this principle, we could most joyfully unite with all. The doctrine of Christian forbearance indeed, requires the continued union of disciples in the same church, amid diversity of opinion and imperfection of obedience; but it neither requires nor allows the abandonment of truth. Truth

is at the foundation of the spiritual temple. It must be maintained, or the vital principle of the new man expires; the main spring of holy action is broken. If, for the important question, what saith the Scriptures? we substitute, what is expedient, as means to increase our sect? we manifest, that while we disavow the *name* of popery, we retain its *spirit*. This is the mark of the beast.

Brethren, how can we be 'the ground and pillar of the truth,' while we adopt or act upon the principle, that it is expedient to deviate from the truth? If we begin to act on this principle, where shall we end? I repeat it, we necessarily lose the true character of the church of the living God, and bear false testimony concerning it, so far as we act upon this corrupt, though specious, principle. How can we urge the word of the Lord as a proof against other men's sins, while we advocate the right of departing from it ourselves? How does it appear that we love the Saviour, and reverence his authority in Zion, but by keeping all his commandments so far as we understand them? 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.'

Brethren, we need expect no new revelation to consummate the millennial glory. Is it not by the return of the people of God to that pure word from which they have departed, and by a strict conformity to the holy simplicity and order of the new Testament, that Zion is to put on her beautiful garments, and shine forth in sacred attire to the glory of her Lord, and the joy of his obedient subjects? Is it not by a faithful adherence to Scripture, that the prayer of the Messiah that his disciples be ONE, that the world may believe that the Father hath sent him, is to be answered? Let us then, in the fear of God, for his glory, and for the salvation of perishing men, immediately return unto Zion. 'Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south!' If a model exists in the

new Testament by which all churches ought to be regulated ; if each is occupied in imitating this, they will gradually approach nearer to one another, and thus the numberless sects and parties which dishonour the religion of Jesus will be at an end. If such a model be not acknowledged, union is not to be expected. If there be no king, every one will do what is right in the sight of his own eyes. But what saith the Almighty ? ‘ Yet have I set my King on the holy hill of Zion.’ ‘ Blessed are they that do his commandments.’

CONCLUSION.

And now, reader, in the prospect of that day, when to be found with the ‘ little flock’ of the true followers of the Lamb, and not with the multitude of carnal professors, will be our highest honour and blessedness ; permit the writer, for the truth’s sake, to present the question,—‘ Are these things so ?’ Has the true testimony of that word which abideth for ever been exhibited in the foregoing pages ? If so, wilt thou avoid the aggravated condemnation of knowing thy Master’s will and doing it not, and enjoy the true Scriptural evidence of citizenship in the new Jerusalem, by keeping the sayings of God’s book ? Wilt thou return, and encourage others to return, and build again the broken walls of the holy city, where the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof ? As dying and accountable men, it surely behoves us all, most solemnly to ponder the words of our Judge ; ‘ not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.’ It is a truth of tremendous consequence to each of us, that our eternal well-being is inseparably connected with the obedience of faith. To make our garments ‘ white in the blood of the Lamb ;’ and to ‘ follow

him whithersoever he goeth,' are both necessary to our sitting down with him in his everlasting kingdom.

Alas ! how many professors act in their religious concerns, upon the same carnal principles which influence their general conduct. To such, in respect to the unpopular views that have been exhibited, we regret to be obliged to address the forcible words of our Lord, ' how can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only ?'

Beloved brethren, to whom belongs the responsible station of being ensamples to the ransomed flock of the blessed Saviour, and of teaching the same to walk ' uprightly according to the truth of the gospel,' is it not time to bring the redeemed of the Lord out of the wilderness of carnal traditions and worldly conformity, into the green pastures of his own holy truth ? Is it not time to build the Lord's house according to the most holy model ? What will the approbation of the multitude, what will the flattery and support of worms of the dust avail us, if He who walks in the midst of golden candlesticks be frowning upon us for trimming our ways ? How light and insignificant will all sacrifices and sufferings for his precious name appear to us, when, after being favoured to act in some humble degree with a single eye to his glory, the cheering plaudit shall fall on our ear, ' Well done thou good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

Disciples of God's anointed One, permit me affectionately to exhort you to shake off your chains, and to go forth in the holy liberty wherewith your master makes you free. From all societies in which the holy truth is sacrificed at the shrine of carnal wisdom and presumptuous pride, the word of the Eternal is calling you to ' come out.' Numerous and powerful are the temptations to keep you there. Plausible and illusive

are the arguments urged in favour of making void God's commands by man's traditions. But 'the Judge standeth at the door.' 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.'



NOTES

CONTAINING

OBJECTIONS TO SOME STATEMENTS

IN THE

PRECEDING WORK.



NOTES.

NOTE 1.

(*See Preface to the First English Edition.*)

This is surely a loose way of speaking about standards* and the Scriptures. Every one knows that the most erroneous sects profess to take the Scriptures for their guide. Arians, Unitarians, and others, equally unsound in doctrine, speak precisely in the same loose way. Standards are understood to be a short connected view of the sense in which we understand Scripture to speak. And the use of standards is, that those who join together in communion may know what are each other's common sentiments on the leading doctrines of Scripture; and that they may serve as a confession to those who may inquire what is *their* belief, as distinguished from *others* who also own the Scriptures to be a Divine revelation.

NOTE A.

(*See page 20.*)

IMMERSION AND IMMERSE.—For this writer to assume at once, that the word '*baptizo*' means to '*immerse*,' is a very short way of settling the question; but it may be asked, is it a sure one, or a fair one? Let us look to the reason he gives in Notes 1 and 2. It is proper, he says, to call

* That the reader may correctly apprehend the meaning of this and some other expressions in these Notes, it is proper to state, that their author is a member of the Established Church of Scotland.

it immerse, ‘because every part of our Lord’s will should be revealed *in our own tongue*.’ The answer to this is, that the word *immerse* is just as little *in our own tongue* as the word baptize is: *immerse* being a *Latin* word, and *baptize* a *Greek* one. Besides, baptize being the original word, has a claim to be preferred. For this reason, the author has no fair right to substitute the word *immerse*, as if it were the *undisputed* meaning of *baptizo*. If it is to be substituted, good grounds of another kind ought to be shown.

NOTE B.

(See page 22.)

The original word baptizo, or bapto, means sometimes to dip, sometimes to sprinkle. It is used in each of these senses by *Greek* writers. It is used in each of these senses by *Scripture* writers. Its most common meaning in Scripture is, to sprinkle or pour.

In Mark vii. 4, the word *baptisms* is applied to the washing of tables, of beds, and of couches, which we cannot suppose to have been done by dipping. It must have, therefore, been by sprinkling or pouring.

In the case of John’s baptizing in Enon, because, as it is said, there was *much water* there, the proper translation, it may be stated is, that there were *many waters* or rivulets there; and it is evident that John might do so, by standing on the brink of these, and pouring or sprinkling water on those who came to his baptism. Besides, we may fairly reason that the time and inconvenience necessary in baptizing these great multitudes by *immersion*, would be such, that the nature and emergency of the forerunner’s office would not admit of it.

In the case of Philip, &c. Acts viii. 36, 38, they are described as going *into* the water. But every one who knows the use of the original terms, may see that going *into* the

water, does not necessarily mean that they went so far into it as was required for dipping. It may mean to the depth of a hand-breadth, or less, or more; and coming *out* of the water simply means coming from the water—from its channel. If it means any thing more than this, it must then be admitted that the *baptizer*, as well as the *baptized*, was immersed; a thing that is not, of course, to be supposed.

In the case of the Philippian jailor, we can scarcely suppose, that at midnight they would go to a river, or have convenience and opportunity in a prison, for immersing him and his family.

In the case of Cornelius and others, we may reasonably come to the same conclusion. Sprinkling was more simple and convenient.

In the passage quoted from Romans, (vi. 3, 5) the word *buried* is often urged as an argument for dipping, as bearing a resemblance to Christ's being *buried in the earth*. Now, it cannot be intended that there was to be any resemblance in the mode. For Christ was *not actually buried in the earth*. He was put into a sepulchre or apartment hewn out of a rock, with an entrance, into which a man could walk in an upright posture. Therefore, there could be no resemblance in Christ's burial to dipping.

The word *buried*, like the word *planted*, used afterwards, is simply figurative of the *purpose*, not of the *mode* of the ordinance; and means that we have by baptism an interest in Christ's death and resurrection.

Besides this, in Hebrews, ix. 10, the divers washings or baptisms obviously refer to the ceremonial sprinklings of the Mosaic law, which are called *sprinklings*, three several times by the apostle.

Add to this, that in Hebrews xii. 24, the blood of Christ,

which baptism represents, is called the blood of *sprinkling*. And the cleansing of the spirit spoken of in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, which also baptism represents in a figure, is described as a sprinkling: 'I will *sprinkle* clean water on you.' The *sign of sprinkling*, therefore, best expresses the reality.

But what is conclusive on the point, is that passage in 1 Corinthians, x. 2. The Israelites are said to have been 'baptized into Moses *in the cloud* and in the sea.' The words *in the cloud*, are, in the original, *under the cloud*, (the Greek word *ὑπο* being used)—that is, that while the cloud passed over their heads to come between them and the Egyptians, it dropped or *sprinkled* water on them.

NOTE C.

(See page 23.)

The passages here quoted, from Romans and Galatians, do not, in the smallest degree, affect the relation of infant baptism to the Abrahamic covenant. We know well, that many of the Jews were Abraham's children, in one sense, and not in another; his children by the flesh and by external privileges—not his children by faith and obedience. This distinction is marked with great point in speaking of the Jews as the children of the patriarch, in the 6, 7, and 8 verses of the 9th of Romans, to show that out of the *visible Jewish church*, enjoying *external* ordinances, there was taken a *chosen* seed enjoying inward grace. Now *all* the Jewish nation, or their visible church, enjoyed, among other things, the outward ordinance of infant circumcision; while only *some* enjoyed the inward circumcision of the Spirit. And if this was the case then, is there any inconsistency now in administering infant baptism to those who are outwardly, and by descent, in covenant with God; even though it should turn out that these do not all become the subjects of saving grace?

NOTE D.

(See page 23.)

The writer gets very easily and shortly quit of the connection of baptism with circumcision. But, perhaps, it is not quite satisfactory to serious inquirers, to have an important point in the subject so summarily thrust out of sight. Circumcision was administered to infants: therefore, 'unconscious babes' may be the subjects of external ordinances. It was, strictly speaking, an initiatory or introducing rite;—therefore, of baptism which also is an initiatory or introducing rite, children may be the subjects. It made the parent or head of the family responsible for the instruction and right direction of his family; (see Genesis xvii.) therefore, the cases recorded in Acts, in which, the parent being himself converted, has his household or family baptized, show that there was a similarity in the purpose of the two institutions. They were both given to the children of *outward* professors, as *outward* ordinances. They might *both* be improved or misimproved for salvation. Baptism has come in the place of circumcision. For the latter has been repealed, according to Acts xv. 24, 29, and baptism is called the circumcision of Christ, in Col. ii. 11, 12.

NOTE E.

(See page 23.)

The writer says, 'we have not a precept, not an example,' for infant baptism in the Scriptures. To this it may be answered, that we have 'not a precept, not an example,' for a woman's partaking of the Lord's Supper. But, as we never for a moment suppose, that for want of this, women are to be excluded; so we are not to suppose, that on such ground, infants are to be denied baptism. Women are in-

cluded in the more general terms: 'man,' 'mankind,' 'disciples,' &c. and children are included in the general terms, 'household,' 'family,' &c. Therefore, if infant baptism can be proved on other grounds, this remark of the writer goes for nothing.

There is no reason to suppose that the privilege given to the *Jewish* children, of being admitted into the visible church, by a significant visible rite, should be refused to *Christian* children; that is, children of Christian parents. On the contrary, Christ says, 'Suffer little children to come unto me.' And says, that such belong to the gospel church, 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' If they belonged to the gospel church, why ought they not to be *introduced visibly* to the gospel church, that the church may see and know that they are solemnly marked as the objects of her care? True, *Christ did not baptize the children* whom he called to him; but *neither did he baptize adults* whom he called and invited. Jesus baptized not, but his disciples. His mediatorial work was not yet complete; it was after all was finished, that he gave the *special commission*, 'go and teach all nations, baptising them,' &c. or more properly translated, 'go, and *make disciples* of all nations,' &c., intimating that they were to bring, or procure, or induce mankind, to become scholars of Christ, at the same time baptising them. Besides this, see that clear and striking passage in Acts ii. 38, 39.

Besides this, see 1 Corinth. vii. 14, where the parents are spoken of as holy, that is, by *profession*, and the *children* are reckoned holy in this sense of the term, without reference to, or rather as distinguished from, holiness of heart and life; just as the Jews were called a *holy nation*, holy by profession and privilege; though many, very many of them, were far from being holy in soul and spirit: but, on the ground of their parents being holy by outward profession, children are admit-

ted to an outward holy ordinance ; though only some of them may become holy in heart and life.

It is to be remembered, that the abuse of this Divine ordinance of infant baptism, which prevails to such an awful extent in the Episcopal and Romish Churches, is no argument against the right and Scriptural use of it.

These few hastily written notes, may, it is humbly hoped, preserve the young Christians who read this copy of this pamphlet, from being greatly perplexed in mind about baptism.



LETTERS
ON THE
MODE AND SUBJECTS
OF
BAPTISM
CONTAINING
STRICTURES
ON THE PRECEDING NOTES.



LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having now looked over the manuscript notes appended to the short treatise you put into my hands, I shall, in compliance with your request, communicate some remarks which the perusal of them has suggested. As you did not authorize me to mention the name of their author, it will serve every purpose, and, at the same time, save repeated circumlocution, if I designate him simply as Mr. ——. On questions of this nature, it is *principles* we are concerned with; not *persons*. It is greatly to be deprecated, when religious discussion is made matter of personal wrangling, more than a means of eliciting truth.

In his first note, Mr. ——, objects to a few sentences in the preface, as speaking, in his view, ‘in a loose way about Standards and the Scriptures.’ The sentences objected to are as follow :—

“ They now stand connected with the reformed churches, and the many
“ thousand disciples, who, in that country, have ‘laid aside all human
“ theories as a bond of union.’ They are now built together upon the
“ simple testimony of the apostles, ‘ Jesus Christ himself being the chief
“ corner stone,” &c.

The justness of Mr. ——’s objections to the sentiments here expressed, I am at a loss to perceive. The intention of the writer obviously is, to point attention to the principle of paying an implicit deference to divine, in contradistinction to human authority, in all matters of faith and practice: and every candid reader will, I think, admit, even though he

entertain different sentiments from those advocated, that the deference paid to Scripture, in every page of the publication, is deserving of all praise. The question uniformly asked, is not, What thinkest thou? but, What readest thou? To the law and to the testimony:—this is the test, by which every point is professedly proved.

The prominence given to this principle, I regard as a distinguishing excellence of the body, to which, the writer of the treatise belongs. The supreme authority of Scripture, and more particularly, of the apostles, who taught Christianity when complete, is brought distinctly forward, and made to bear at once on every question of doctrine and practice. Instead of choosing among creeds and confessions of faith, compiled by fallible men in former ages; or servilely adopting the opinions and practices of our forefathers; we are taught to look beyond the churches of Scotland, of England, and of Rome, altogether: and proving all things by the sole attested Standard, to become followers and imitators of those first churches in Judea that enjoyed the infallible guidance of the apostles. When the conscience is thus brought *directly* into contact with divine authority, our faith is kept from standing in the wisdom of men; and the ear is open to hear His voice who said, ‘Then are you my friends when you do whatsoever I have commanded you.’

This way of forming our religious opinions, is very different from that followed by Arians and Unitarians; whom, I notice, Mr. —, classes with this writer, as all professing to take Scripture for their guide, and as ‘speaking precisely in the same loose way.’ It is well known, that Unitarians, while they professedly own the Scriptures to be a Divine revelation, do not even *profess* to submit implicitly to their authority; but interpret them in accordance with reason—that is, *their particular* reason, or, in other words, their preconceived

opinions. Instead of regarding Christianity as given at once to the world, matured at its birth, and admitting of no improvement, they conceive, that as a matter of knowledge, it is like the sciences, progressive; naturally adapting itself to the human mind in every advancing stage of supposed mental illumination. 'Christianity,' says their most eloquent living writer, 'admits of endless development. It is the last truth that should remain stationary.' What a contrast between this theory, and the simple plan recommended in the passage objected to, of believing whatever is revealed; and practising whatever is commanded! To represent both as speaking of Scripture precisely 'in the same loose way,' is calculated to create a very unfavourable and unfounded prejudice against the views advocated, and seems hardly consistent with candour and truth.

With respect to Standards, I do not find that the writer of the preface says anything on the subject: he simply states, that the persons mentioned had 'laid aside all human theories as a bond of union;' and I hope, Mr. —, does not disapprove of their doing so. What is the Scriptural bond of Christian union? Not human theories of any sort, most assuredly. The Christian union of which we read in the new Testament, was the union of persons professedly agreed in the one Gospel of salvation, and agreeing to walk together in the one way of obedience enjoined by the apostles. As these persons had all one Lord, so had they all one faith, and one baptism. They were built together as the holy temple in which God now dwells, (1 Cor. iii. 16) on their united profession of that gospel which was attested by the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. Societies of this description, who follow the footsteps of these first Christians, will never feel any need of human Standards; and religious communities, on the other hand, who make such

standards, or human theories of any sort, the bond of their union, possess no just claim to the title of Scriptural churches.

In his next note, Mr. —, objects to the word *immerse* being substituted for *baptize*, as the translation of *baptizō*. ‘This,’ he says, ‘is a very short way of settling the question ; but it may be asked, is it a sure one, or a fair one? Let us look to the reason given in his notes 1 and 2.* It is proper, (it is there stated) to call it *immerse*, because every part of our Lord’s will should be revealed in *our own tongue*. The answer to this is, that the word *immerse* is just as little in our own tongue as the word *baptize* is, *immerse* being a *Latin* word, and *baptize* a *Greek* one. Besides, *baptize* being the original word has a claim to be preferred.” Mr. —, here calls the writer’s *fairness* in question ; how far his own objections are distinguished by fairness of statement, we shall now consider.

After saying ‘Let us look to the reason the author gives in his notes 1 and 2,’ he professes to state what the reason there assigned is, (else why does he cite both notes) but instead of doing so correctly, he quotes what the author *has not* assigned, and, evidently, does not regard as the *principal* reason for making the change; which, having replied to, he then, as if he had refuted the *real* reason advanced, confidently announces, that ‘for *this reason* the author has no fair right to substitute the word *immerse* ;’ and ‘that if it is to be substituted, good grounds of another kind ought to be shown.’ This may be termed a *reply* ; whether it can correctly be termed an *answer*, I may safely leave you to judge.

But let us attend to Mr. —’s, ‘answer,’ such as it is. ‘The word *immerse*,’ he says, ‘is just as little in our own tongue as the word *baptize* is : *immerse* being a *Latin* word and *baptize*

* See page 20.

a *Greek* one.' This, plainly is not an answer to the reason assigned by the author for making the change; viz. that it is requisite we should know *definitely*, what Jesus Christ requires of us in the ordinance of baptism. If our Lord has required us to be sprinkled with water, we do not obey him if we are immersed; if he has required us to be immersed, we do not obey him if we are sprinkled. But it has happened in the process of time, through some religious communities practising sprinkling, others pouring, and others immersion, that the word *baptize*, (which is the original term untranslated) conveys to the English reader no uniform or definite meaning. It conveys the meaning of sprinkling or pouring to one, and of immersion to another. Is it not, therefore, highly desirable and important, that its correct signification, whatever it be, should be distinctly expressed by a word of *unequivocal* meaning. Now Baptists conceive, (and the most learned Pædobaptists are of the same opinion) that the original word *has* a definite meaning; which meaning is best expressed by the term *immersion*. Are not they, accordingly warranted, when stating their views of Christian duty, to substitute this word for *baptizing*, seeing they do not make the change clandestinely, or without assigning what they deem to be adequate reasons for doing so, viz. they consider this to be the correct translation; and they find it necessary to change the English version, in order that the wayfaring man, who is unable to read Greek, may have no difficulty in understanding the divine will?

Mr. —'s remarks, that '*immerse* is just as little in our own tongue as *baptize* is, *immerse* being a Latin word and *baptize* a Greek one; and that '*baptize* being the original word has a claim to be preferred,' are alike irrelevant. The question is not respecting the etymology of the two English terms, *baptize* and *immerse*. What is wanted is not a word of

Greek or Saxon derivation, particularly ; but one, of whatever origin, that conveys a *definite* meaning. *Sprinkling* is such a word ; and if sprinkling be the correct rendering, let *baptizó*, by all means, be translated accordingly. *Immerse* also is such a word : *baptize* is not.

We now come to the very important question, what *is* the correct translation of the word *baptizó* ? Mr. ——'s answer is as follows :—

‘ The original word *bapto*, or *baptizo*, means sometimes to dip, sometimes to sprinkle. It is used in each of these senses by *Greek* writers. ‘ It is used in each of these senses by *Scripture* writers. Its most common ‘ meaning in *Scripture* is to sprinkle or pour.’

I have transcribed this statement, I confess, with feelings of very considerable surprise. The meaning of a Greek word is ascertained first, from the testimony of the best critics and lexicographers ; and ultimately from its current use by the most approved writers in the language. Mr. ——, is doubtless, aware that all Lexicons of acknowledged authority, such as H. Stephanus, Scapula, Hedericus, Suicerus, Stockius, &c. or in English, Donegan, (founded on the German of Schneider) Parkhurst, &c. are unanimous in giving *dipping*, *plunging*, *immersing*, as the primary current meaning ; and support it by such a variety of classical and sacred authorities, that no competent scholar ever thinks of calling it in question.

It would be easy to cite in proof of this, the testimony of distinguished *Pædobaptist* writers of almost every different religious community. Witsius, for instance, a Dutch Calvinist says, ‘ It cannot be denied, that the meaning of the word is *to plunge*, or *to dip*.’ The celebrated Catholic writer Bossuet testifies, ‘ It signifies *to plunge*, as is granted by all the world.’ It was the opinion of the distinguished Greek scholar Porson, (of the church of England) that *baptizo* means *a total immersion*. And Dr. G. Campbell, of Mr. ——'s own community

states, ‘*Baptizein*, both in sacred authors and classical, signifies *to dip, to plunge, to immerse*, and was rendered by Tertullian, the oldest of the Latin Fathers, *tingere*, the term used for dyeing cloth, which was by immersion.’ ‘*Baptizô*,’ says Robert Barclay, who though not a pædobaptist, must also be allowed to deliver an impartial testimony, ‘signifies *immergo*; that is, to plunge and dip in; and that was the proper use of water baptism among the Jews, and also by John and the primitive Christians who used it.’ Similar testimonies without number, might be adduced; but I shall only add, that in the Danish Catechism, to the question,—‘What is implied in the words Matt. xxviii. 19,’ the answer is, ‘A command to the dipper and the dipped; the person must be deep dipped in water, or overwhelmed with it;’ and that by the Germans, the Swedes, and the Dutch, baptizô in the new Testament is translated dipping. On the other hand, I am not aware there is a single Lexicon of any authority, in which *sprinkling* and *immersing* are both given as being alike, the meaning of baptizo, (the signification evidently conveyed by Mr. —’s statement); or that gives *sprinkling* as the proper or ‘common’ signification of the word at all.

What the grounds are then, on which Mr. — alleges that *sprinkling* or *pouring* is its ‘most common meaning in Scripture,’ I am at a loss to conceive. Of course, he is aware, that when the word *sprinkling* occurs in the English translation, the corresponding word in the original is in no case *baptizô*, but *rantizô*. It is admitted on all hands, that *sprinkling* is the signification of the latter; but I cannot conjecture who the critics are, and where the Lexicons are to be found, that give sprinkling as ‘*the most common meaning*’ of *baptizô*. Instead of this being the current meaning of the word, either in Scripture or elsewhere, the learned Venema (a pædobaptist) states, ‘The word is *no where* used

in Scripture for sprinkling ; no, not in Mark vii. 4, otherwise than appears to some :’ and it would be easy to quote concessions from a crowd of other learned pædobaptists, that *immersion* is its primitive and current meaning, both in classical and sacred authors. Now, as Mr. ——— was writing for the use of young Christians, who would naturally receive his statements on a point of this sort, with entire confidence, not being competent to judge of it for themselves, it was, I think, peculiarly incumbent on him to give what is the generally admitted signification of the word. But that which he has assigned to it, is in accordance with no Lexicon I have ever consulted ; and I should like Mr. ———, or any other pædobaptist, to point out the Lexicon which gives *sprinkling* as its primary, current meaning, or which does *not* give *dipping*, *immersing*, *plunging*, as its settled and universally received meaning.

There are no words, perhaps, in the Greek language that have received a more careful, critical examination, than *baptô* and *baptizô*. Every known occurrence of them, in sacred, and classical writers, has been adduced with a view to ascertain their radical meaning and current use. And what has been the result as respects the point at issue ? The latest writer on the subject (by whom, every competent judge must admit, it has been investigated with equal elaborateness and skill) has, on the ground of innumerable examples, come to the conclusion that *baptô*, the root, ‘ possesses two meanings, and two only, *to dip* and *to dye* ;’ and that the derivative *baptizô* ‘ *always* signifies *TO DIP*, and *never expresses* any thing but *MODE*.’* Nor am I aware that this conclusion has been as yet seriously controverted ; or that it can, by adequate evidence, be set aside.

* Carson on Baptism *passim*.

This is a point, however, respecting which you cannot be expected to form a satisfactory opinion, and I have mentioned the matter merely to show the present state of the controversy; as also that you may have an opportunity of comparing and contrasting the *conclusion* publicly maintained by the latest writer on the subject, with Mr. ——'s *statement*. That the latter is calculated seriously to mislead the unlearned reader, I think I am warranted in affirming; for I have no hesitation in saying, it is grossly erroneous, and wholly incapable of proof.

But I have dwelt too long, I am aware, on the points of criticism, to which I have adverted in this letter, seeing you cannot feel much interest in the discussion; and I shall conclude at present, by reminding you, that no person ought to be deterred from carefully and conscientiously examining this important question, on account of its appearing to hinge on the meaning of a Greek word, of which, he does not feel himself competent to judge. There is other evidence, and that of a nature of which *every one* can judge, amply sufficient to satisfy the honest inquirer, whose object is, to ascertain and *follow truth*: and it ought to be remembered, that every man, whether he be of this class of inquirers or not, is responsible for interpreting this evidence correctly.

On some points of evidence of this kind, I shall submit a few remarks in my next.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Whether baptism be *immersion* or *sprinkling*, is to be determined chiefly, though not wholly, by ascertaining the meaning of the original term. A person acquainted with Greek, forms his judgment by consulting the language for himself; an unlearned man by the best evidence he can obtain from the testimony of others. Those who are unacquainted with the language, however, have evidence within their own reach, which, of itself, would on other subjects be deemed quite decisive.

That native Greeks must understand their own language better than foreigners, every one will admit. The Greek Fathers must, accordingly, be supposed to have interpreted their mother tongue quite as accurately as any pædobaptist modern critic, or any existing religious community whatever. Now, it is *their* unanimous testimony, that *baptizó* signifies *dipping*, and it is matter of history, that Greek Christians have always understood the word in this sense; and have baptized by immersion from their first embracing Christianity to the present time. Seeing then, that the original word has never been translated into *English, those Christians who, without understanding Greek, baptize by immersion, have this

* The English translators were directed by King James, to retain the old ecclesiastical words, of which *baptism* was one.

safe ground of action, that they are interpreting the word precisely as the Greeks themselves have always interpreted it.

Every one, too, must perceive, that when our Lord directed the apostles to 'Go—baptize,' he spoke as a legislator, and delivered a divine law. That the apostles could have had any difficulty in understanding what this law was, it would be an impious reflection on the lawgiver's wisdom, to suppose. We cannot, accordingly, conceive, that of three actions, so obviously dissimilar, as *pouring*, *sprinkling*, and *immersing*, any but one could have been enjoined. Now when the unlearned reader is informed, that there are two Greek words, of frequent occurrence in the sacred volume, uniformly used to express respectively to *sprinkle*, and to *pour*, it is surely natural for him to expect, if either of these actions had been enjoined, that he should find one or other of these two words employed. If sprinkling were enjoined, for instance, he will expect to find the term *rantizó*, as we find it used in Heb. ix. 13, 19. x. 22. xii. 24. 1 Pet. i. 2. If pouring were the action, he will expect to find *cheó*,* as occurs in Luke x. 34, Acts ii. 17, 33. x. 45. Or, if the action enjoined had, as some maintain, been washing in general without reference to *mode*, he will naturally expect the occurrence of some appropriate term, such as *luó*, in Acts xvi. 33. 1 Cor. vi. 11. 2 Pet. ii. 22; or *níptó*, as in John xiii. 6, 10. Matt. xv. 2. xxvii. 24; or *plunó*, as in Luke v. 2. Now, as the term that is employed is expressive, neither of sprinkling nor of pouring, nor of *every mode* of washing, but only of dipping or immersing; and as pædobaptists themselves concede, that the term in question properly, and currently, signifies *to immerse*, what other conclusion can the reader,

* Xεω or Xuω. The compounds ερχεω, ερχυω, and others also occur.

whether he be unlearned or otherwise, deduce than this, that *immersion* must have been the action enjoined.

Had baptizô been properly translated into English, as other Greek words usually are, the unlearned reader would have had no difficulty in ascertaining the true nature of the divine ordinance: and that the English translators, had they been less under the influence of political restraint and ecclesiastical prejudice, would have translated it *immerse*, is manifest from their rendering the primitive word *baptô*, in every instance of its occurrence in the new Testament, by the word *dip*. See Matt. xxvi. 23; Mark xiv. 20; Luke xvi. 24; John xiii. 26; Rev. xix. 13.

That the Greek language is sufficiently copious to express the different actions of *dipping*, *sprinkling*, and *pouring*, in appropriate terms, is unequivocally shown by all these terms occurring occasionally in the same context. Thus, in the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Scriptures, we find in Lev. iv. 6, 7. the three words in question, within the compass of two verses; and all distinguished as expressive of three successive actions to be performed with the same thing. ‘And the Priest shall *dip* (*bapsei*) his finger in the blood, and *sprinkle* (*prosranei*) of the blood seven times before the Lord, and before the veil of the sanctuary:—and shall *pour out* (*ekcheei*) all the blood of the bullock, at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering.’

But which of the three actions mentioned is really enjoined, may, by the unlearned reader, be further ascertained, by his substituting each, in turn, for the original word *baptize*, in every instance of its occurrence in the English translation. Thus, for example, if we make the experiment on *pour*; we must read, ‘Jesus was *poured* of John *in* or *into* Jordan.’ ‘Repent and be *poured* every one of you.’ Or, if we try *sprinkle*; we must read, ‘John was *sprinkling* in Enon, near

to Salim, *because there was much water there*, and they came and were *sprinkled*.' 'Therefore, we are buried with him by *sprinkling* into death.' Now, on the other hand, if we employ in these passages, or in any other passage whatever in which *baptizô* occurs, the word *immerse*, the sense is uniformly dignified and perfectly proper. In addition to this, it is obvious from the term *baptizing* being connected with the particles *in* and *into*, and from baptism being always expressed as performed *in* or *into* something, that it cannot be either pouring or sprinkling, but only *immersion* that is enjoined. We cannot read, for instance, that John *sprinkled*, or *poured*, *in* or *into* 'the river Jordan.*

Nor does it require a knowledge of Greek to perceive, that when we read so frequently of the Jewish people being baptized by John, *in the river Jordan*; or that John was baptizing at a particular place, *because there was much water there*, (or, 'many waters,' the change is not material) that such statements are reconcileable with *immersion*, but not with *sprinkling* or *pouring*. It would be incredible, for instance, were a modern historian to narrate, that a clergyman of this town went, with several of his congregation, to Liverpool, to *sprinkle* or *pour* infants *in the Mersey*; or, that he frequently went there to sprinkle, *because there was 'a large quantity of water,'*† or 'many waters *there* ! Mr. — says, 'it is evident

*The prepositions *en* (in) and *eis* (into) in some cases signify *with* and *at*; but in this connexion, they must obviously be understood in their *usual* sense.

† 'Nothing can be more evident,' says the 'candid Doddridge,' 'than that *polla udata* signifies a *large quantity of water*.—Dodd. Fam. Expos. in loc.

'Since sprinkling came into fashion,' says Robinson, 'criticism unheard of in all former ages, hath endeavoured to derive evidence for scarcity of water from the Greek text of the Evangelist John, and to render *polla udata*, not *much water* but *many waters*; and then, by an ingenious supposition, to infer that *many waters* signifies, not many waters collected into one, but waters parted into many little rills, which might all serve for sprinkling, but could not any one

that John might stand on the brink of these (waters) pouring or sprinkling water on those who came to his baptism.' There is no doubt *he might* do so, but is the supposition consistent with common probability or common sense ; or does it harmonize with the sacred narrative ? Can any person in the exercise of unbiassed judgment suppose, that if a handful of water would have sufficed for baptism, people would *have gone* so frequently to rivers for that purpose : would not the water have been *brought to them* as we uniformly see it brought when sprinkling is performed now ? Or, if a handful of water would have sufficed, would the sacred historian have assigned, as a reason for baptizing at *a particular place*, that there was *much water there* ? Doubtless, there was a sufficient quantity of this necessary of life in every inhabited part of Judea, for *sprinkling* its entire population.*

Or let the unlearned reader peruse attentively the baptism of the Eunuch, recorded Acts viii. 36, and he will be at no loss to determine whether *he* was *sprinkled* or *immersed*. Philip, in preaching, had shown that all who believed the Gospel were immediately to be baptized ; and the Eunuch, so soon as he comes to water, asks, ' What hinders me to be bap-

of them be used for dipping : as if one man could possibly want many brooks for the purpose of sprinkling one person at a time.

It is observable that the river Euphrates at Babylon, Tiber at Rome, and Jordan in Palestine, are all described by *polla udata*. See Jeremiah li. 13 ; Rev. xvii. 1, 18 ; Ezek. xix. ; Numb. xxiv. 7 ; Psalm xxix. 3. How it comes to pass, that a mode of speaking, which on every other occasion signifies *much*, should in the case of baptism signify *little*, is a question easy to answer.—Hist. of Bap. p. 14.

* Though Palestine has been declining in fertility ever since the Babylonish captivity, and is now comparatively desolate ; that it deserved the commendation Moses originally gave it, is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of ancient historians and modern travellers. It was ' a good land, a land for cattle, a land for wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates ; a land of brooks, of water, of fountains, and depths, that spring out of valleys and hills ; a land flowing with milk and honey.' Deut. viii. 7, 8, &c. See also JOSEPH. de Bel. Jud. lib. iii. cap. 3. Tac. Hist. lib. 5. Shaw, Maundrell, &c.

tized?’ Now, had a handful of water been sufficient, it is natural to think that the Eunuch, if journeying through a desert, would have had a supply with him; or, if it was an inhabited country, that he might have procured it any where. But we read that when they came to the water, instead of going or sending for a little, (he was the Queen of Ethiopia’s chamberlain, and in all probability, had a retinue) ‘they went down *both into the water.*’ Let us hear now, Mr. —’s explanation of this. ‘They are described,’ he says, ‘as going into the water. But any one who knows the use of the original terms, may see that going *into* the water does not necessarily mean that they went so far into it as was required for dipping. It may mean to the depth of a hand-breadth or less, or more; and coming *out* of the water simply means coming from the water—from its channel.’* Supposing then, for a moment, that such was the case, would it not have been quite as natural, and much more convenient, had sprinkling been performed, to have sent for a little water, instead of going *into* it at all? But we read, ‘they went *both* into the water.’ The question, therefore, occurs, why did they *both* go *into* it? merely to get a little to sprinkle with? One of them, surely, might have procured a sufficient quantity without

* Dr. G. Campbell, after stating, that *baptizein*, both in sacred writers and classical, signifies *to immerse*; adds, that it is always construed *suitably* to this meaning—as *in* water, *in* the Jordan. ‘But I should not lay much stress,’ he continues, ‘on the preposition *en*, which answering to the Heb. ב may denote *with* as well as *in*, did not *the whole phraseology*, in regard to this ceremony, concur in evincing the same thing. Accordingly, the baptized are said to *arise*, *emerge*, or *ascend*, *apo*, (Matt. iii. 16.) and *ek*, (Acts viii. 29,) *from*, or *out of*, the water. When, therefore, the Greek word is *adopted*, I may say, rather than *translated* into modern languages, the mode of construction ought to be preserved, so far as may conduce to suggest its *original import*. It is to be regretted that we have so much evidence, that even good and learned men allow their judgments *to be warped* by the sentiments and customs of the sect which they prefer. The true partizan, of whatever denomination, always inclines *to correct* the diction of *the Spirit* by that of *the party.*’ Transl. of the Four Gospels.—Note on Matt. iii. 11.

both going into the water. Mr. — is of opinion, however, that if it means any thing more than he has stated, ‘it must then be admitted, that the *baptizer*, as well as the *baptized*, was immersed; a thing that is, of course, not to be supposed.’ Now, even were this argument well founded, it would obviously be much better fitted for *silencing* an opponent than *convincing* him:—the reason for *both* Philip and the Eunuch going *into the water* would remain altogether unsolved. But it requires little discernment to perceive, that such an argument, instead of being well founded, has no other foundation than ignorance or misconception of what takes place when immersion is performed. Had Mr. — ever witnessed this ordinance, he could not, I think, have fallen into the error of asserting, there can be no alternative between ‘going into the water, to the depth of a hand-breadth, less or more;’ and ‘the baptizer and baptized being both immersed.’ Every one knows, that while the baptizer usually goes along with the baptized into the water, to a suitable depth, he stops, and putting the person under the water, and then raising him up, comes out with him again. Had Mr. — read the passage with due attention, he could not have failed, I think, to find all these circumstances distinctly detailed in the sacred narrative. Our attention is first directed to the fact, that ‘they went *both down into the water* : to point out this circumstance more precisely, it is added, ‘*both Philip and the Eunuch.*’ Having gone into the water, instead of *both* being immersed, as Mr. — imagines must have been the case, if ‘they went in beyond a hand-breadth, less or more;’ we are informed, ‘*he baptized him.*’ The narrative concludes by stating, that when ‘they were come up *out of* the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.’ Whether this circumstantial statement harmonizes with *immersion*, or be reconcileable with

sprinkling, the reader, acquainted or unacquainted with 'the use of the original terms,' may safely be left to determine.

Having learnt, to his own satisfaction, the meaning of the term by which the ordinance is designated; and considered the circumstances attending its performance recorded by the inspired writers; if the unlearned reader carefully examines Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5, and Col. ii. 12, he will find such a resemblance between *baptism* and *burial* intimated, as of itself may convince him that the divine institution must be *immersion*, and not *sprinkling*. To those who find themselves incompetent to judge of the original meaning of the Greek word *baptizô*, these passages furnish the divine explanation of the ordinance:—an explanation sufficiently clear for every practical purpose, and pregnant with the richest meaning. Baptism, we here learn, is a symbolical ordinance, exhibiting to our senses in a figure, what is elsewhere declared by way of testimony, respecting the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as the foundation of human hope. It represents the believer of the Gospel as one with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection; so that as Christ died and was buried; in like manner, is the believer planted in the likeness of his death, and buried with him in baptism; and as Christ rose from the dead to procure immortal life for his followers, so does the Christian rise from the water to newness of life.*

* As the force of the comparison made by the apostle, between baptism and the leading truths of Christianity, cannot be discerned by those who practise *sprinkling* or *pouring*, it would be well for such seriously to consider what important lessons are thus necessarily lost. One would think, that such a passage as the following, which occurs in one of the most esteemed of the Greek Fathers, Chrysostom, might of itself awaken suspicion of the incalculably injurious error. 'The old man is buried and drowned in the immersion under water: and when the baptized person is lifted up from the water, it represents the resurrection of the new man to newness of life.' In like manner, we find the English Reformer, Tyndall, thus describing the meaning of the ordinance, 'The *plungyng* into the water, signifieth that *we dye* and are buried with Chryste, as concernynge the old *lyfe of synne*, which is Adam. And the *pullynge* out again, sygnifyeth that *we ryse agayne* with Chryste in a *newe lyfe*.'

Mr. —, is of opinion, however, that as ‘Christ was not actually buried in the earth, but put into a sepulchre or apartment, hewn out of a rock, with an entrance, into which a man could walk in an upright posture, there could be no resemblance in Christ’s burial to dipping.’ That there could be no resemblance in Christ’s burial to the mode of baptism, is an assertion I was not prepared to expect. The expression ‘buried with him in baptism’ plainly imports, that in baptism, we are *buried* with Christ; and that baptism is, in *some sense*, a burial. It is so, no doubt, as a figure; but a likeness must exist to justify the figure. Seeing then, that, as an emblematical action, baptism must contain *some* likeness to burial, the question is, in which of the two actions, *immersion* or *sprinkling*, is this likeness to be found? Now, while no one will maintain there is any likeness in the latter case, all candid pædobaptists admit the obvious likeness between *burial* and *immersion*. Even this, however, is by Mr. — controverted; and he thinks, that as Christ was not actually buried, but put into a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, there could be no resemblance between this and the *mode* of baptism. But whether Christ was put into the earth, or into a rock, is a mere circumstance in no degree affecting the resemblance which the use of the figure implies. The likeness does not depend on any peculiarity in the practice of burying in ancient times, inasmuch as *immersion* possesses a sufficient resemblance to every kind of burial, whether ancient or modern. It is obvious, that burying in Scripture must mean burying in the usual meaning of the word; that is, *the committal of the body to the earth, or putting it under the ground*. Between this, and *immersion*, or *the body being put under water*, the likeness is obvious enough; between this, and *sprinkling a few drops on an infant’s face*, there is no likeness whatever.

As Mr. —’s other objections to the word *baptizô*, being

translated *immerse*, seem to be of the same description, being all founded on supposed difficulties or improbabilities attending the observance of the ordinance, I shall now notice them together and in order. Before doing so, however, I wish to press on your attention, that if from etymology, from use, and from antiquity, it is ascertained that *immerse* is the correct rendering of the word *baptizó*, no apparent improbability attending its use in any case, is to be regarded as a valid objection to this rendering, unless there be other and adequate evidence warranting us to interpret the word in a different sense. It is an important and recognized rule in reasoning, that when a point is proved by sufficient evidence, no objection from difficulties can be admitted as decisive, except they involve impossibilities. Were this rule not acted on; and were every man's notions of probability allowed to counterbalance positive evidence; we could not obtain satisfactory assurance of any truth whatever. For there are difficulties, you are aware, connected with our belief of the divine authority of Scripture;—nay, more, there are difficulties attending our belief of the eternal existence of the Deity.

Now, if we look at Mr. ——'s objections to Christian *immersion*, we shall find they are nearly all founded on supposed difficulties, which it would be contrary to every correct rule of reasoning to admit as equivalent to positive evidence. He says, 'in Mark vii. 4, the word baptisms is applied to the washing of tables, of beds, and of couches, which *we cannot suppose* to have been done by dipping. It must, therefore, have been by sprinkling or pouring.' But were this notion unquestionably correct; this much is clear, that such a conclusion is by no means a logical inference from Mr. ——'s premises. The baptisms of beds may not have been *dipping*; but it does not follow, it must *therefore* have been *pouring* or *sprinkling*. This, however, is not the point with which we are concerned: the question is,

can Mr. —, or any other pædobaptist, show that the baptisms here mentioned, *could not possibly be dipping*? For, as there is abundant evidence of *dipping* being the current and universally admitted meaning of the word, if there is no impossibility involved in this use of it in the present instance, we are not at liberty to reject it, and affix a meaning of our own invention. It is freely admitted, that it does appear strange to us, that beds should be dipped: but it is to be remembered, we have very inadequate notions of the practices common to Pharisaic superstition. We learn from Maimonides, that if the Pharisees touched but the garments of the common people, they considered themselves so defiled as to be under the necessity of being *immersed*. The custom, indeed, seems to have obtained with superstitious Jews generally, to dip the whole body every day, previous to sitting down to meat;* hence we find the Pharisees expressing their surprise at Jesus not conforming to this practice. Luke xi. 38. We find, moreover, by the Jewish Misnah, or Book of Traditions, that *the dipping of beds* was by no means regarded as a strange custom. It is there recorded, without any expression of surprise, as we might expect, had the practice been unusual, that ‘a bed which is wholly defiled, a man dips it part by part.’ The law of Moses, in fact, enjoined, that if any vessel became *unclean*, ‘whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin; whatsoever vessel it be, wherein any work is done, (*baphcsetai*) *it must be put into water.*’ Lev. xi. 32. Now the *klinai* in question, might either be the couches at table, or the beds on which people slept. These, it is to be borne in mind, were not like modern couches and beds. We read, Matt. ix. 5, that the man cured of the palsy took up his bed and departed to his house. On the ground then, of the universally received

* Scaliger de Emend. Temp. lib. 6.

rule of interpretation, that the ordinary and proper signification of words is not to be deserted, except for cogent reasons, I conceive there is no adequate reason for our understanding the baptisms of beds, and couches, contrary to the usual acceptation of the term.

In reference to the case of John baptizing at Enon, Mr. — states, ‘We may fairly reason that the time and inconvenience necessary in baptizing this great multitude by immersion, would be such, that the nature and emergency of the fore-runner’s office would not admit of it.’ The improbabilities adduced in this case, it is obvious, are purely imaginary. As ‘the nature’ of John’s office required him to baptize, we may ‘fairly reason’ its ‘emergency,’ however great, would admit of his discharging the duties on which he was sent. With respect to ‘the time’ required to immerse great multitudes, this would be little, if any more than what would be required *to sprinkle them*; and with respect to the ‘inconvenience,’ this, we are distinctly told, was obviated at Enon, as ‘there was *much water there*.’

Mr. — states further, ‘In the case of the Philippian jailor, we can scarcely suppose, that at midnight, they would go to a river, or have convenience, or opportunity in a prison, for immersing him and his family. In the case of Cornelius, and others, we may reasonably come to the same conclusion. Sprinkling was more simple and convenient.” Mr. — is, no doubt, at liberty to come to any conclusion he pleases; but, if he means to maintain that the individuals mentioned were sprinkled and not immersed, he must allow me to say that in support of such conclusion, he has not advanced a shadow of legitimate proof. He has advanced nothing but notions of the inconvenience attending immersion in a prison, and notions of sprinkling being more simple and convenient— notions which, even, were they indubitably correct, cannot

be admitted as valid objections to abundant and positive evidence. There is no impossibility involved in the supposition of immersion being performed, at midnight in a prison; and it is sufficient if there *might be* convenience there. For, if it can be shown that immersion was not impossible, it is not requisite to prove also that any of the conveniences conceivable, actually existed. The burden of proof lies on the other side; and, unless the opponents of immersion can show that it could not possibly have been performed, we are warranted in interpreting the word agreeable to its current meaning. Thus interpreting it, we ‘reasonably come to the conclusion,’ that the persons mentioned *were immersed*.

We arrive now at Mr. ———’s evidence of *sprinkling* being the usual meaning of *baptizô*. As his statement maintains, that *to sprinkle* or *to pour* is ‘*the most common* meaning of the word in Scripture,’ it clearly devolves on him to support this position by abundant and decisive proof. The instances he has adduced, (I may add, that by any have been adduced) are not numerous; how far they are decisive, we shall now shortly consider. He states that ‘in Heb. ix. 10, the divers washings or baptisms obviously refer to the ceremonial sprinklings of the Mosaic law, which are called sprinklings, three several times by the apostle.’ Now, were it quite obvious that in these divers baptisms, there was a reference to the ceremonial sprinklings of the Mosaic law, *such a reference* would not be tantamount to evidence of *baptismata*, signifying *sprinklings*. But it is by no means certain, that every kind of purification, enjoined by the law, was included in these divers baptisms. The baptisms mentioned may have been called *divers*, not because there was any diversity in the mode, but on account of the performance of such baptisms being enjoined on various occasions, and with a view to purify from various sorts of uncleanness. See Lev. xv. xvi. xvii. Numb. xix.

17, 18, 19. As all the bathings referred to were by immersion, it is natural to suppose, that the word in Heb. ix. 10, must mean, in accordance with its current use, the *immersion* of the different things that were required by the law to be *immersed*. At all events, the passage furnishes no evidence whatever of *baptismois* signifying *sprinklings*.

‘Add to this,’ says Mr. —, ‘that in Heb. xii. 24, the blood of Christ which baptism represents, is called the blood of *sprinkling*. And the cleansing of the Spirit spoken of in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, which also baptism represents in a figure, is described as a sprinkling. ‘I will *sprinkle* clean water on you.’ ‘The *sign of sprinkling*, therefore, best expresses the reality.’ What evidence these passages afford in support of Mr. —’s statement, I am at a loss to conceive. The expression, ‘the blood of sprinkling,’ in Heb. xii. 24, it is obvious, alludes not to Christian baptism, but to the sprinkling of the Israelites with blood, and to the sprinkling of the blood of the sin offerings within the vail on the mercy seat. By a common figure, the cause is put for the effect, and the meaning is, that Christ’s people come at last to the enjoyment of the blessings procured by the sprinkling or shedding of his blood.* The words in Ezekiel, ‘I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean,’ every one knows, form part of the great promise then so clearly announced, of the future blessings of the Gospel—of the realities of that new covenant, which the covenant then existing prefigured. What best expresses these realities, we may feel assured, are not unauthorized inventions of man, but the institutions of Divine wisdom. Of sprinkling being such an institution, no evidence exists.

* See Macknight in loco.

Instead of these passages supplying evidence in favour of sprinkling, they would seem to point plainly at an opposite conclusion. For as the terms rendered *sprinkling* and *sprinkle*, are in the original, both in Heb. xii. 24, and in the Septuagint version of Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, *rantizó* and *rainó*, it is manifest, that when the sacred writers wished to express the sense of *sprinkling*, they were at no loss in finding an appropriate term. Every one agrees that these words signify *to sprinkle*. If sprinkling, then, be the action enjoined as Christian baptism, what reason can be assigned for the absence of *rantizó*, in every case where baptism is mentioned in Scripture, and the constant use of another term, the proper meaning of which, both in classical and sacred writers, is on all sides acknowledged to be, *to immerse*.

The evidence hitherto adduced in support of the statement, that ‘to sprinkle or pour is the most common meaning of *baptizó* in Scripture,’ is alike scanty and inconclusive; and we now arrive at the last passage produced. This passage, however, is in Mr. —’s view, *conclusive* on the point. ‘But what is conclusive on the point,’ he says, ‘is that passage in 1 Cor. x. 2. The Israelites are said to have been ‘baptized unto Moses, *in the cloud* and in the sea.’ The words ‘in the cloud,’ are in the original *under the cloud* (the Greek word *υπο* being used) that is, that while the cloud passed over their heads to come between them and the Egyptians, it dropped or *sprinkled* water on them.’ No one, I feel assured, would think of adducing this passage as ‘conclusive’ evidence of baptism being *sprinkling*, who did not find, that evidence of any kind in support of this view, was very scarce. The Israelites, in passing through the Red Sea, are said to have been baptized unto Moses; but it is, on all hands admitted, that the word *baptized* occurs here in a figurative sense.

‘They were baptized into Moses,’ says Parkhurst, ‘i. e. into obedience to those laws which Moses delivered to them from God.’ Though the primary and current meaning of the word *baptizô*, is *to immerse*, no one denies that it admits, like all similar words, of different figurative applications. The metaphorical use, however, is to be learned from the primary, and not the primary from the figure. It is not maintained there was any thing, in the present case, like a literal immersion in water: though there was, unquestionably, a resemblance both to the mode and design of baptism. In the Israelites going down into the sea; in their being covered by the cloud; and in their afterwards coming out on the other side; there is a sufficient resemblance to Christian immersion, to justify the figure; and the passage served a like purpose with baptism, inasmuch as it initiated them fully into the service of Moses, and attested their faith in him, as their temporal saviour. The supposition, that ‘while the cloud passed over the heads of the Israelites, it dropped or sprinkled water on them,’ is altogether arbitrary and fanciful; for of water, or rain, falling from the cloud at all, no evidence can be adduced. But as this supposition seems to derive its support from Mr. ——’s proposed substitution of the words ‘baptized unto Moses *under* the cloud,’ for the rendering, we find, in the English version, ‘in the cloud,’ and this change being evidently proposed inadvertently, (the Greek word is not *υπο* but *εν*) it is needless to dwell on the point further.

It may be proper, however, to mention, that the words ‘under the cloud,’ occur in the preceding verse; but we, assuredly, have no evidence that the Israelites, when under it, were sprinkled with rain. On the other hand, we learn from the sacred narrative, Exod. xiii. 21, xiv. 22.; Numb. ix. 15, that they were *under the cloud for protection and guidance*; and that under this

protection and guidance, passing safely through the sea, they showed, or professed, their full confidence in Moses ; and were, in this way, baptized or enlisted into his service, as their divinely appointed leader, out of Egypt, into the promised land.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It has been shown, I trust, to your satisfaction, that the passage 1 Cor. x. 2, when interpreted in accordance with the facts of sacred history, instead of being 'conclusive' on the point, furnishes no evidence whatever in support of Mr. ——'s *statement*. That sprinkling or pouring, is 'the most common meaning of baptizô in Scripture.' Mr. —— has not merely failed to prove—he has not even shown, it has this meaning in a single instance. Most pædobaptists admit that immersion was frequently practised in new Testament times, but Mr. —— makes no concession of the kind. While he holds that *to dip* is sometimes the meaning of *baptizô*, he controverts this rendering in the clearest cases, and finds *sprinkling* every where.

I know of no writer of any repute, who has maintained, that *to sprinkle* is 'the most common meaning' of the word; or who gives this as its primary and current signification at all. On the other hand, the admissions of eminent pædobaptist writers respecting its received use, and also respecting the prevailing practice of the early church, are alike numerous, and unequivocally expressed. In illustration of this, the following quotations may suffice; though it would be easy to add a multitude of others, not less pertinent and decisive.

'It is universally admitted,' says a recent intelligent writer,

‘that in primitive times, immersion was the rule, and an affusion an exception allowed only in cases of sickness. As for *aspersion* or *sprinkling*, it may well be doubted, whether such a thing was known in the early church.’* ‘The baptism of the ancient church,’ says Bishop Jer. Taylor, ‘was not sprinkling, but *immersion*, in pursuance of the *sense of the word* in the commandment, and *the example* of the blessed Saviour.’ ‘Immersion’ says Dr. Cave, ‘was the almost and constant universal practice of the primitive times.’ ‘It being so expressly declared, Rom. vi. 4, and Col. xi. 12,’ says Dr. Whitby, ‘that we are buried with Christ in baptism, by being buried under water, and the arguments to oblige us to a conformity to his death by dying to sin, being taken hence; and this immersion being religiously observed by *all Christians for thirteen centuries*, and approved by our church; and the change of it into sprinkling, even without any allowance from the Author of this institution, or any licence from any council of the church, being that which the Romanist still urgeth to justify his refusal of the cup to the laity, it were to be wished that the custom of immersion might be again of general use, and aspersion only permitted, as of old, in cases of the *clinici*, or in present danger of death.’

Since aspersion or sprinkling, and affusion or pouring, are thus, so generally admitted to be innovations, you will naturally wish to be informed how these practices originated. Satisfactory information on this point, you will easily obtain, by consulting the pages of early ecclesiastical history. It may suffice at present if I mention that the former seems to have been introduced at a date, by no means so early as the latter. The practice of *affusion*, as a substitute for *immersion*, like that of

* British Mag., 1836, p. 700.

infant, in addition to the baptism of professed believers of the gospel, appears to have had its origin in an opinion which very early prevailed respecting the outward efficacy of the ordinance. Baptism being regarded as infallibly procuring the remission of all past sins, the salvation of those who did not commit sin after being baptized, was considered secure. Some, accordingly, were so deluded as to defer baptism till the immediate prospect of death ; and were actually baptized on their death-beds. In such cases, when from great weakness or alarming sickness, there was no time or convenience for immersion ; or if danger was apprehended from it, an affusion of water on the face was substituted. When the sickness did not issue in death, such persons were termed *clinici*, from having been baptized in their beds : this clinical baptism, however, was always in indifferent repute, and, at some periods, disqualified for the priesthood. At no time, indeed, did it prevail to any extent ; and there is abundant evidence of immersion being the ordinary practise, not only during the first centuries, but in every period of the Roman Catholic church, down to the Reformation.

In some quarters, even prior to this era, sprinkling seems to have obtained some footing. The cause of its introduction has not been very clearly ascertained ; but it has been traced to France and other countries, where popery was most firmly established. In the year 753, Pope Stephen III. being obliged to fly from Rome, on account of that city being oppressed by the King of the Lombards, took refuge in France, and remained there a whole winter. While resident in that country, a number of questions, considered of importance, were put to him, by some monks of Cressy, in Brittany ; among which was the following : whether, *in case of necessity*, occasioned by illness, it were lawful to baptize an infant by water being poured out from the hand or a cup, on its head ? The Pope's

answer was in the affirmative. This is accounted the first authentic law for pouring ; and it soon came to be interpreted as warranting sprinkling. But even this decision of the Pope, as the learned Basnage remarks, does not *forbid* dipping ; nor does it even sanction pouring or sprinkling, except in cases of imminent danger : it did not, accordingly, alter the usual mode of dipping in *public* baptisms. In this answer of Pope Stephen's, however, both sprinkling and *private* baptisms are supposed to have had their origin. But not only did the Lutheran Reformers continue to immerse,* but all 'Christians in the world,' says Dr. Wall, 'who never owned the Pope's usurped power, do, and ever did *dip* their infants in the ordinary use ;' and he states, that basins, except in cases of necessity, were never used by any, 'till by Papists themselves.' 'The way or manner of administering baptism,' says the same learned historian, 'that is now ordinarily used, we cannot deny to have been *a novelty*, brought into this country by those who had learned it in Germany or Geneva. As they

* 'What was the judgment' says a pædobaptist writer in the Gentleman's Magazine, 'of our first Reformers in England, on this point,' (dipping) appears from the Liturgy in Edward the Sixth's reign : 'That the priest was to take the child by the right hand, and to place him within the font ; there he was to be dipt thrice,' &c. And that the same was the judgment of the foreign Reformers, appears from the express testimony of Luther. 'Baptism,' says he, 'is a Greek word : it may be termed a dipping when we dip something in water, that it may be wholly covered ; and although that custom be now abolished among the most part, for neither do they dip the whole children, but only sprinkle them : they ought altogether, nevertheless, to be dipt and drawn out again, for the etymology of the word seems to require it.' The author from whom this quotation from Luther is taken, mentions from Bugenharius Pomeranus, that he having been asked to witness a baptism at Hamburgh, in 1529 ; he was surprised to see the minister only sprinkle the infant ; and in a general assembly of ministers he asked John Fritz, who was present, how baptism was performed at Lubec, who replied, they were baptized naked as in Germany, but how the peculiar custom had crept in at Hamburgh, he was ignorant. It was agreed that the judgment of Luther and the divines of Wittemberg should be demanded on the point. Luther's answer to the enquiry when made was, that sprinkling was a custom they ought to renounce. Thus plunging of infants was restored at Hamburgh."—Gent. Mag. for 1739, p. 12.

were not content to follow the example of *pouring* a quantity of water (which had been introduced instead of immersion) but improved it, (if I may so abuse that word) from *pouring* to *sprinkling*, that it might have as little resemblance of the ancient way of baptizing as possible.’

In England, the custom seems to have been adopted first by the gentry ; and fashion which, in all ages, has had its influence with the multitude even in matters of religion, gradually spread itself over all classes of the community. ‘It being allowed,’ says Dr. Wall, ‘to weak children (in the reign of Queen Elizabeth) to be baptized by aspersion, many fond ladies and gentlewomen first ; and then, by degrees, the common people would obtain favour of the priest to have their children pass for weak children, too tender to endure dipping in the water.’ The substitution of the basin for the font, however, was never entirely effected till the Westminster Assembly of Divines issued their directory. ‘For sprinkling, properly so called,’ says the same writer, ‘it seems it was in 1645 just then beginning, and used by very few. It must have begun in the disorderly times of *forty one*. . . . Then came the Directory, which says, ‘Baptism is to be administered, not in private places, or privately, but in the place of public worship, and in the face of the congregation ; and not in places where fonts, in the time of Popery, were unfitly and superstitiously placed.’*

* It seems to have been owing to the influence of one individual in this Assembly, namely Dr. Lightfoot, that dipping was excluded, and sprinkling declared sufficient. When the Assembly came to vote on the question, whether the directory should run thus : ‘The minister shall take water, and *sprinkle* or *pour* it with his hand, upon the face or forehead of the child ;’ many were unwilling to have *dipping* excluded, and the votes were found equal within one ; there being on the one side twenty four, and on the other twenty five. When the question was next day resumed, Lightfoot insisted on hearing the reasons of those who were for dipping. At length it was proposed that it should be expressed thus : ‘That pouring on of water or sprinkling, in the administration of baptism, is lawful and sufficient.’ Against the word *lawful*, as thus used, Lightfoot excepted, and moved that the words should stand : ‘It is not only lawful, but also sufficient ;’ and it was adopted and recorded accordingly.

By these quotations, (which have been all taken, allow me to remind you, from pædobaptist writers) it appears that sprinkling is comparatively of recent introduction. ‘It is *a novelty*,’ to use Dr. Wall’s words, ‘brought into England by those who had learned it in Germany or Geneva.’ We have seen that it was not till the middle of the seventeenth century, that the custom became general in this country; and though it has long been universal in the church of England, it is still contrary to the express injunction of the rubric, which is, that ‘children shall be dipped when they are certified to be able to endure it.’ Calvin was probably the first who formally prescribed *pouring* instead of *immersion*; and the Westminster Assembly, in the deference they paid to this Reformer, completed the change by converting the font into a basin. We see, accordingly, that in countries such as Scotland, where Calvin and this Assembly of Divines are regarded as authorities, the custom of sprinkling has long almost universally obtained.

But since there is such a superabundance of evidence of immersion being enjoined in Scripture, and of its being the almost universal practice of the early church; you will now, perhaps, be ready to ask, how it is, that these truths are not generally admitted, and the primitive ordinance restored? The truth is, they are, and have been admitted by some of the most eminent writers the church of England has produced; and even by a few leading divines of the church of Scotland; but it is well known, that in such bodies, it is much easier to acknowledge and lament an innovation like this, than to effect its removal. I remember noticing a few months ago, that an intelligent writer in one of the most influential organs of the English church, proposed attempting the revival of immersion; courageously expressing doubts, ‘whether the universal practice of *sprinkling* be not *absolutely unlawful*, being against the

order of the church, and having no other foundation than carelessness or worse.' His suggestion, however, as was to be anticipated, met with little favour from his brethren. There are many of the clergy indeed, who broadly deny, that any change is either necessary or desirable. The treatment which a subject of this nature receives, at the hands of different members of these ecclesiastical establishments, furnishes, in fact, a tolerably accurate indication of the character of their minds. For in this, as on all similar questions, there are *a few* whom candour prompts readily to admit evidence wherever they find it, convinced it must eventually aid *the side of truth*: the true partizan, however, (an appellation that characterizes *the many*) is proof against the clearest evidence, if it be not in favour of *his side*.

The clear and copious evidence that exists in favour of *immersion*, has procured concessions from pædobaptist writers, so numerous and so unequivocal, as to constitute one of the most effective *ad hominem* arguments in its defence: but it is in vain we look for the smallest concession from one of these scrupulous supporters of the systems or standards, recognized by his own party. It was the saying of the celebrated Hobbes, 'that even mathematical truths would be denied, if the interests of men required the denial of them;' and it may, without any hyperbole, be affirmed, there is no evidence short of demonstration which the religious prejudice produced by party feeling combined with worldly interest, will not resist. 'I have heard a disputant of this stamp,' says a writer distinguished alike for acuteness and candour, 'in defiance of *etymology*, and *use*, maintain that the word rendered in the new Testament *baptize*, means more properly to sprinkle than to plunge: and in defiance of *all antiquity*, that the former method was the earliest, and for many centuries the most general practice in baptizing. One who argues in this manner,

never fails, *with persons of knowledge*, to betray the cause he would defend; and though *with respect to the vulgar*, bold assertions generally succeed as well as arguments, sometimes better, yet a candid mind will disdain to *take the help of a falsehood*, even *in support of truth*.*

These are the sentiments of a pædobaptist—one of the most accomplished scholars of which the church of Scotland can boast. It must be owned, that those who consider themselves bound to defend sprinkling in defiance of etymology, in defiance of use, and in defiance of antiquity, impose on themselves no enviable task: and I feel quite disposed, in concluding my remarks on this part of the subject, to adopt the words of another distinguished pædobaptist writer, the learned historian of infant baptism, ‘As for *sprinkling*, I say as Mr. Blake, on its present coming up in England: *Let them defend it that use it*.’†

I am, &c.

* Dr. G. Campbell's Lectures on Systematical Theology, p. 481.

† Wall's History of Infant Baptism, Vol. III. p. 140.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Having noticed in detail, the objections Mr. — has advanced to the Scriptural *mode* of baptism, I shall now proceed to consider his notes on *the subjects* of the ordinance. Previous, however, to following him here step by step, you will, perhaps, allow me to advert briefly to some leading points of evidence. The question hinges on certain principles; and it is desirable that these should be clearly understood, before subordinate points are taken into consideration.

Permit me at the outset, to remind you, that the first point we ought to ascertain is, *the authority* we have for practising baptism at all. The number of persons, I am persuaded, is not small, who have never duly considered the simple but important question, ‘On what grounds does the common practice of baptizing rest?’

That we are not authorized to practise baptism, because it is, and has been, a prevailing custom among Christians; or, because circumcision was a rite practised by the Jews, it must be superfluous to state. To warrant our engaging in a religious act of such a solemn nature, it is necessary there should exist *evidence* of its being *a command of heaven*.

That baptism is a divine institution, we learn from the commission our Lord gave to his apostles, ‘Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe

all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' Matt. xxviii. 19 ; and also from the practice of the apostles in executing this commission as recorded in sacred history. The apostles were instructed to teach or disciple all nations ; and to baptize those in every nation, whom they did disciple. We find, accordingly, that they uniformly baptized all of whom they made converts ;—or, in other words, all who professed their belief of the gospel.

That the apostolic commission is the authority on which Christian baptism primarily rests, is ground common to baptists and pædobaptists : there is no difference of opinion accordingly, about the duty of *baptizing converts who profess their faith in the gospel* ; the necessity of this being, on all hands, admitted. Now I wish to call your attention particularly to the circumstance, that *this* being precisely what baptists practise ; it is clear, that on the principles common to both sides, *they*, at least, proceed on safe ground. For baptizing professed believers of the gospel, there is the positive authority of heaven. On *this authority* baptists act ; but they refuse to proceed a step farther : they presume not—*they dare not* extend the practice to infants and others, for baptizing whom, they cannot find any authority to exist.

The simple point we have to ascertain then is, to what class of persons does this commission relate ? One would think that to any unbiassed reader, the words of the commission are so plain, as to render such a question superfluous. The apostles were to teach, or disciple all nations : this clearly means, they were by teaching men the gospel, to bring them into the school of Christ, in which they were to learn his will. The persons, therefore, whom this commission warrants to be baptized, are believers ; or scholars of Christ who profess their belief of the gospel. That this is the meaning of the injunction, is clear from the parallel passage in the Evan-

gelist Mark ; in which, the persons called by Matthew disciples, are designated ‘believers;’ ‘*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*’ Whenever, accordingly, we meet with the word *disciple*, which we do very frequently, it is always used as designating learners in the school of Christ ; in fact, the words *disciple* and *believer* are used interchangeably.

But if it needed confirmation, that the commission respects persons, who have been taught and who personally profess Christianity, this is to be found in the recorded practice of the apostles, who, we read, in the discharge of the duties of their office, uniformly baptized those only of whom they had made disciples, by teaching them the gospel. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, we find that when Peter preached the gospel to the Jews, they ‘who *received his word* were baptized.’ And when Philip preached the gospel to the Samaritans, we read that ‘when *they believed* the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, they were baptized, both men and women.’ Supported, therefore, by this authoritative commentary, we conclude, that according to the apostolic commission, persons who have been taught the gospel and who profess their belief of it, are alone to be baptized ; and that all others are excluded.

It is to be observed, that as this commission relates to *disciples or believers*, it does not, on the one hand, exclude children or young persons who come under *this* designation ; nor on the other, does it extend to grown up persons who are not converts to the gospel. But as with unconscious infants, it is in no way concerned ; it is evident, that if there be divine authority for baptizing such, it must be derived from some other source. All who *do* baptize infants, however, ought most assuredly, to be in possession of *adequate evidence* of the practice being commanded. For what was formerly stated respecting the necessity of a divine warrant for every solemn act of wor-

ship like this, is not less applicable here. And it is moreover, to be kept in mind, that baptism being a *positive*, not a *moral* duty, its obligation and circumstances must depend entirely on the revealed will of the Institutor : the baptism of infants, therefore, *cannot be a duty*, unless there be an express revelation of the divine will to that effect. If, then, this revelation is no where to be found :—if there be no command to baptize infants, nor a single instance of the practice recorded in the sacred volume, we are naturally led to the conclusion, that instead of being a duty, it is an act of will-worship ;—a human invention, which has been allowed, in so far as it has been practised, to usurp the place of the divine ordinance, and virtually to set it aside.

Precept or example for the practice, neither Mr. —, nor any other pædobaptist can produce. In the absence of better proof, however, Mr. — has recourse to what he calls ‘ the relation of infant baptism to the Abrahamic covenant,’ and ‘ the connexion of baptism with circumcision ;’ but, as Scripture is silent on the subject, no one can reasonably regard remote relations and supposed connexions of this sort, as tantamount to a warrant for a *positive* institution, whose obligation, whose nature, and whose circumstances, depend wholly on the divine will being expressed respecting them.

The force of this remark, you cannot fail to perceive, if you keep in view the important distinction that exists between *moral* and *positive* duties :—a distinction recognized by all standard writers, in the discussion of other subjects. Moral duties are founded not only on external commands, but are recognized by the human conscience as right in themselves, and as universally obligatory independent of any specific enactment. The obligations to love our Maker, and to act justly towards our neighbour, for example, being thus recognized by conscience, are called moral duties. Duties, on the other hand, which arise from an express revelation of the divine

will, are called *positive*, because without such a revelation, we could not know them to be duties at all. ‘Moral precepts,’ says Bishop Butler, ‘are those, the reasons of which we see : positive precepts are those, the reasons of which we do not see. Moral duties arise out of the nature of the case itself ; positive duties from external commands.’ In other words, while moral duties are commanded, because *they are right* ; positive duties are right, solely because *they are commanded*.

Now it being admitted on all hands, (by pædobaptists as well as others) that baptism is a positive duty, arising entirely from the revealed will of the Institutor ; it is clearly impossible we can know any thing respecting it, except in so far as this will has been expressed. Were it a moral duty, it might be inferred from general considerations :—from analogy, from the fitness of things, from expediency, or from moral principles : but being a positive institution, deriving its whole authority from the *expressed* will of the divine Law-giver, its obligation can be inferred from no other source whatever. If then, there be neither any command to baptize infants, nor a single precedent for the practice, the conclusion seems unavoidable, that all pretended arguments in its support, derived from other sources of evidence, must be sophistical or irrelevant. Baptism is a positive institution : but the existence of a *positive duty* without any expression of the divine will, is a contradiction in terms.

Though the considerations that have already been adduced, must by all, I think, who can discern their full force, be deemed decisive of the point at issue ; and though I consider it profitless labour to examine arguments, that, from their nature, we may expect to find fallacious or irrelevant ; I feel no reluctance in following Mr. —, or any other pædobaptist, into their favourite field of analogical and inferential reasoning from the preceding dispensation. The charge of unsound-

ness or sophistry, is not unfrequently adduced against a course of reasoning, from a conscious inability to answer or refute it; and the true meaning of the subterfuge, when expressed in words is, 'these are arguments I should like to answer, *but cannot*.' It is easy for any one to say, 'this or that argument is sophistical,' but if it be so, the fallacy, wherever it lies, ought to be pointed out; otherwise the judgment pronounced is deserving of little regard. A principal use of reasoning is to expose pretended arguments that have no value. A sound argument, on the other hand, will admit of being tested by the strictest rules of reasoning, without its force being impaired.

With respect to the covenant made with Abraham, the subject, in my view, when scripturally understood, has no relation whatever to the baptism of infants; but it is not necessary here to assign at length, reasons for entertaining this opinion; for even Mr. ——— does not adduce 'the relation' in question, as a warrant for the practice; but only as obviating objections to its consistency with the practice of the preceding economy. 'Is there any inconsistency now,' he says 'in administering infant baptism to those who are outwardly and by descent in covenant with God?' But two things may have some show of consistency, without either, or both, being founded on truth. Previous to showing the consistency between infant baptism and the preceding dispensation, it would seem the natural course to show first, that the practice is of divine authority.

As for 'the connexion of baptism with circumcision,' to which Mr. ——— seems to attach so great an importance, there is no inducement, I can assure him, 'to thrust the point out of sight,' from any fear of its furnishing evidence in favour of the practice he advocates. But to what, after all, do his inferences, from this supposed connexion, amount? That 'un-

conscious babes *may be* the subjects of external ordinances,' and that 'children *may be* the subjects of baptism.' But the question is not, in the first instance, whether children or infants *may be* the subjects of external ordinances, but whether it be true, that, under the Christian dispensation, such is the case. Let evidence of divine authority be produced, and no one will call in question the qualifications of the subjects. Mr. — adds, that circumcision and baptism were 'both given to the children of outward professors.' This is a mere begging of the question : and it would be sufficient to reply,—the statement is incapable of proof.

There are still some, you are aware, whose views are so powerfully influenced by the scheme of scholastic theology, in which they have been professionally trained, as to regard a system of ecclesiastical polity, contrived in adaptation to, and designed to embrace the population of, a particular territory or country, as 'the visible church of Christ.' By such, it is supposed that a nation which assumes *the name* or *a form* of Christianity, becomes, by adopting a system of this kind, the natural successor of the Jewish theocracy ; so that it is warrantable, they think, to infer that as the Jewish nation, (the then 'visible church') enjoyed the outward ordinance of circumcision, in like manner ought the present 'visible church,' (or in other words, the members of the civil and ecclesiastical corporation mentioned) to enjoy infant baptism. With those whose minds have become thoroughly imbued with these semi-judaical notions, and whose arguments, at their very outset, proceed on the gross fallacy of confounding the old covenant of Moses with the new covenant ratified by the death of the Messiah, it is almost hopeless to reason ; for so long as they misconceive so entirely of the true relation in which Judaism stands to Christianity ; or, so long at all events, as their views are so dark respecting the spiritual nature of 'the kingdom of heaven,' the force of the clearest scriptural evidence cannot be discerned.

Every one knows that the Jewish nation was placed under a government of a very peculiar nature ; a system which has, appropriately, been termed a theocracy, from its having been the government of Jehovah himself. The Israelites had laws delivered to them, not merely for the regulation of their civil affairs, but also for their whole form of worship. Jehovah was, in fact, their King, both in a political and religious sense, dwelling among them by visible glory, and governing their affairs by the frequent interference of *a miraculous* providence. They were thus, 'a kingdom of priests,' 'a holy nation,' i. e. a nation separated from others for God's peculiar service : and Jehovah was their God, in a sense, in which he never was, or has been, to any other nation whatever.

Under this peculiar system of government, the Jews, you will readily perceive, naturally formed *a national* and divinely *established church* ; but it is to be observed, that as both church and kingdom were composed of precisely the same subjects, so were both of a wordly constitution. For as the blessings and promises the church inherited, were of an earthly and temporal nature, so did the kingdom admit of compulsion, or the sword of civil magistracy, in its government and defence. And, as its subjects were the whole population, descending from Israel without distinction of character (in scriptural language, 'the children of the flesh') they were thus, as a people, separated from other nations, and consecrated to God, typical of the true or spiritual Israel of the Christian covenant, who are separated from the world, by their joint profession of the gospel. The whole Mosaic economy, in fact—its sanctuary, its rites, and all its ordinances of worship, adumbrated, or prefigured, the realities of the Christian dispensation.

It was this new and greatly more glorious dispensation that was proclaimed, as being 'nigh,' or 'at hand,' by both John the

Baptist and Jesus himself: and it was designated by them ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ in evident contradistinction to the *earthly* kingdom by which it was preceded. In various passages of the new Testament, we find this new kingdom, or gospel dispensation, prominently contrasted with the Mosaic economy; and the relation of the one to the other is uniformly represented as being that of *letter* and *spirit*, or *shadow* and *substance*. Our Lord thus emphatically marked the distinction, in his confession before Pilate:—‘My kingdom is *not of this world*; If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but *now* is my kingdom not from hence.’ And in the context, we learn, that the subjects of this kingdom are those alone who ‘*are of the truth*,’ having an ear to ‘hear his voice.’ It was to be a kingdom accordingly, wholly unconnected with secular power, for its interests were to be promoted in no degree by force, or worldly influence, but by ‘bearing witness’ to the truth.’

We learn from the writings of the apostle Paul, that the old covenant, established with the Israelites, and all its earthly typical ordinances, had their natural termination in the new and better covenant, ratified by the death and resurrection of the Messiah; and that they are now consequently set aside. To all who attend to the apostolic statements on these points, or who duly consider the contrast so markedly drawn between the old covenant and the new, it must appear surprising, that any should regard the new Testament church, as simply a continuation of the Jewish. But if you examine Mr.—’s reasoning on this point, you will find it has no force or relevancy, except we admit the correctness of this strange supposition. He states, ‘that as many of the Jews were Abraham’s children by the flesh and external privileges, not his children by faith and obedience;’ and as ‘all the Jewish nation or then visible

church, enjoyed among other things the outward ordinance of infant circumcision, while only some enjoyed the inward circumcision of the spirit ;' this being the case, ' there is no inconsistency in administering baptism to infants now, who are outwardly and by descent in covenant with God, even though it should turn out that these do not all become the subjects of saving grace.' Now all reasoning of this sort, is manifestly irrelevant and valueless, unless it can be shown, that the Jewish and Christian churches are of the same constitution and nature ; or, that the one is really a continuation of the other : but it has already been proved that they are materially different ; and you do not require to be reminded, that the one is a continuation of the other, simply as the substance is a continuation of the shadow. The church of Israel was a type of the new Testament church, and though both are called the kingdom of God, they are such in a very different sense. The one was a kingdom of this world, the other was not : the former, by its constitution included carnal members, the latter recognizes none but such as ' are born of the spirit.' How obviously fallacious then, with these differences existing, to argue on the supposition that the two churches are the same ! Such reasoning assumes also, that baptism having come in the room of circumcision, it is quite valid to deduce an inference from the former, and apply it to the latter ;—an assumption wholly unfounded, as I hope in the sequel, satisfactorily to show. In so far as it can be advanced, indeed, with any degree of accuracy, that the one ordinance has come in the room of the other (which is true in no other sense than this, that as circumcision was the initiatory rite of Judaism, so is baptism that of Christianity) if we keep in view the distinction made by the apostle Paul (see Rom. ix. Gal. iii. iv.) between ' the children of the flesh,' and ' the children of the spirit,' it

is obvious, that the argument founded on the supposed connexion between the two ordinances, has no force.

It will by no one, I presume, be questioned, that circumcision, as well as the other institutions of the Mosaic law, had both *a letter* and *a spirit*; i. e. both a literal and a typical or spiritual meaning. Thus, the earthly inheritance of Canaan itself was a type of the heavenly inheritance; and the temporal relation in which Jehovah stood to the Israelites, first by the covenant of circumcision, and subsequently, by the covenant at Sinai, was a type of the spiritual relation in which God stands by the new covenant, to all who are the spiritual children of Abraham, by imitating his faith in trusting the divine promises, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. In like manner, we are taught by Paul, (Rom. ii. 25,) that he was not a Jew who was only one outwardly; inasmuch as that which was merely outward in the flesh, was not real circumcision. But that he was a Jew who was one inwardly, and that true circumcision of the heart, i. e. spiritual not literal.

Now as we are assured, God has had a faithful people in all ages, both under the Mosaic law, and also anterior to that economy, it may be readily conceived, that as circumcision had both a *letter* and a *spirit*, it had a literal sense in relation to 'the fleshly seed' of Abraham, and a spiritual sense in reference to his 'spiritual seed.' But we are not authorized to found on this circumstance, an argument in support of baptizing infants under the gospel dispensation; for baptism has not, like circumcision, *a letter* and *a spirit*, but is a sign of spiritual blessings alone: and we learn, in accordance with this meaning of the ordinance, that the subjects of baptism are those only, who through crediting the divine testimony, become the *spiritual* children of Abraham. 'Know ye, therefore, (says the Apostle,) that they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.' Gal. iii. 7.

It is thus obvious, that as circumcision belonged to the natural descendants of Abraham, under the old covenant, whether carnal or spiritual, so baptism belongs to his spiritual seed under the new ;—and to them exclusive of all others. The former were known by birth ; the latter cannot be known by natural descent, but solely by their personal belief and profession of the gospel. All reasoning, accordingly, which confounds circumcision, that had a literal sense in relation to the carnal seed of Abraham, and a mystical sense in relation to his spiritual seed, with baptism, which has a spiritual meaning alone, and that only in relation to spiritual subjects, is manifestly inconclusive.

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The next statement I find in Mr. ——'s notes is, that 'Baptism has come in the place of circumcision. For the latter has been repealed, according to Acts xv. 24, 29; and baptism is called the circumcision of Christ, in Col. ii. 11, 12.' As this notion of baptism having come in the room of circumcision, and having been regarded by the apostles as its substitute, seems to be a principal link in the chain of reasoning, on which pædobaptists chiefly rely, you will probably expect me to examine this part of the subject more carefully, than its importance, in the view of many, demands. Without professing to follow closely the common track of writers on the subject, I shall, accordingly, adduce a few leading points of scriptural evidence, by means of which, you will have no difficulty, I trust, in ascertaining whether the notion in question has any foundation in Scripture.

There are some pædobaptists, who as they regard the kingdom of Christ as not of this world: and hold in consistency with this, that its subjects are not entitled to spiritual privileges, and ought not to be recognized as members of a Christian church, on the ground of parental connexion, but solely on that of personal religion, must readily feel the force of the arguments adduced in my last letter. While such, however, will admit that these arguments satisfactorily refute the views maintained by Mr. ——, and the advocates of national estab-

lishments of religion, they may dispute whether they have a direct bearing on *their* more enlightened views. But the ensuing reasoning will be found applicable not less to congregationalists and other pædobaptists, who profess to recognize the spiritual nature of the new dispensation, than to the adherents of parochial or national systems of Christianity.

I remark then, in the first place, that though in the passage, Col. ii. 11, 12, which is usually referred to, as authorizing the notion in question, believers of the gospel are stated to be circumcised in Christ, this circumcision is expressly called ‘a circumcision *made without hands*,’ evidently to distinguish it from that *made with hands*, which was its type. The circumcision spoken of accordingly, cannot be baptism; inasmuch, as *it is not* without hands. What is meant obviously is, ‘the putting off the sins of the flesh,’ or the renewal of the heart; in other words, the circumcision of Moses was *a figure* of moral renovation, which is here termed the circumcision of Christ.

What follows respecting baptism in the 12th verse, is additional: and from both verses, we learn, that while baptism and circumcision correspond thus far in meaning, that they both relate to the renewal of the heart; instead of the former coming in the room of the latter, it was the circumcision made without hands, or renovation of character, that came in the room of the Mosaic rite. As all Jewish males were circumcised in the flesh, so all Christians are circumcised in heart. Circumcision and the other Mosaic ordinances, were succeeded, not by corresponding rites, but by their emblematical meaning being fulfilled in the realities of the gospel. They were a shadow of good things to come; the body of which is Christ.

It is thus manifest, that the notion of ‘baptism having come in the place of circumcision,’ derives no support from the passage referred to as authorizing it: it is common, however, for

pædobaptist writers to take this point for granted, as if it admitted of no dispute. It is supposed that the two rites were regarded by the apostles as so analagous, or rather so obviously similar in their use and signification, that the one was naturally substituted for the other ; so that as Jewish infants were circumcised, and thus ‘ admitted into the visible (Jewish) church,’ the infants of Christian parents were baptized, and ‘ introduced visibly into the Gospel church.’ It is usually added, that since the privileges of the Christian are greater than those of the preceding dispensation, infants are, surely, not to be denied the same advantages they previously enjoyed : that ‘ although there is abundant evidence of a change in the rite or ordinance, there is none whatever of any such change in its administration, as excludes children from being any longer the legitimate subjects of its observance ;—and that unless there be a statute expressly repealing and setting aside the former practice, we are warranted in continuing it.’

I have stated this view as clearly as I could, partly indeed, in the words of a leading living advocate of the system : for, I am aware it is regarded by many pædobaptists, as their stronghold ; and, in fact, the theory of the one rite’s taking the place of the other, is represented in most of their books, as the basis on which the whole system rests.

In considering this view, allow me to call your attention first, to the obvious inaccuracy of representing circumcision as a privilege given to Jewish children generally. ‘ *All* the Jewish nation,’ says Mr. —, ‘ enjoyed among other things, the outward ordinance of infant circumcision.’ But it is evidently not correct to say, that the rite was enjoined on Jewish children generally ; for it was neither enjoined on, nor enjoyed by, (if such an expression, in any sense, be applicable) *all* the Jewish nation. It was enjoined on all the posterity of Abraham ;—on male infants when eight days old, and

also on the permanent members of every Jewish family ;—on purchased slaves and *their* infants, irrespective of religious knowledge or personal profession of faith. ‘ He that is born in thy house, and he that is *bought with thy money*, must needs be circumcised. . . . And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and *all that were bought* with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house ; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the self-same day, as God had said unto him.’ Gen. xvii. 13. 23. It is obvious accordingly, that from this supposed privilege, (possessed it appears by slaves who were not members of the Jewish church), one half of the population, namely all females, were excluded.

And though circumcision and baptism were both instituted as initiatory rites, they were not merely introductory to dispensations differing materially in their nature ; but the ordinances themselves had very different significations, and were designed to serve very different ends. Circumcision was a token of the fulfilment of the *general* promise, that in Abraham’s seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed ; but it sealed (i. e. confirmed by token) no blessings to *individuals*. It is called, indeed, a seal of the righteousness by faith to Abraham ; (Rom. iv. 11,) but it is evidently termed such, in relation to the peculiar circumstances of the patriarch’s history ; and without reference to the subjects of the rite generally. The apostle adduces the case of Abraham, with a view to refute the objections of the Judaizing teachers to the doctrine he was enforcing, of gratuitous forgiveness without reference to works. As these teachers maintained that justification was confined to the covenant of circumcision, Paul argues that from Abraham having been justified and circumcised previous to that covenant being established, it is evident that the blessing of forgiveness is not limited to the subjects of circumcision, but is

freely bestowed on both Jew and Gentile. His object, in short, is to show, that Abraham received this sign, as a seal or token confirming his justification by faith, *prior to his circumcision*; that he might thus become the spiritual father, or an eminent example to all believers, whether circumcised or not. In this view, the rite may correctly be regarded as a token of Abraham's being gratuitously justified by faith; and it may be regarded, also, as a memorial, that all who follow the steps of the patriarch in trusting God, will enjoy the same blessing of forgiveness; but the general meaning of the rite, it is obvious, is not to be learnt from this particular case, thus introduced as an illustration of the apostle's argument, but from its application to its proper and common subjects.

When we consider then, that it was enjoined on all Abraham's male posterity, without any *personal* profession of faith; on all male infants, when eight days old; on the slaves of every Jew, and *their infants*; it is inconceivable, that to *all* these it could be a seal or confirmation of personal blessings, either temporal or spiritual. It was not a seal of the latter to individuals, for the apostle states, 'he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is the true circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;' nor could it be a seal of the former, for it was administered to slaves, and others, who had no share in the temporal promises.

Circumcision was a sign of the promise that the Messiah should descend from the loins of Abraham; and by keeping the chosen race a distinct people, and preserving the expectation of his coming, it subserved the fulfilment of the promise. Baptism, on the other hand, has no such meaning; and it is superfluous to state, it cannot serve a purpose which has already been accomplished. While circumcision was designed to promote *general* purposes in advancing the scheme of redemption, it confirmed nothing to *individuals*. But baptism

is a symbolical ordinance, which most emphatically imports *personal salvation*. In reference to *individuals* accordingly, we find it recorded, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* ‘*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.*’ *As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.*’ In accordance with these statements, we find the subjects of baptism uniformly represented as being individually in possession of the blessings of pardon and acceptance. What a contrast then, between the privileges of baptism, and those of circumcision ! In fact, instead of the latter being described as conferring personal privileges at all, it is represented as being ‘a yoke on the neck of the Jews, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear ;’ and we know, moreover, it was enforced *by the penalty of death !*

How fallacious, accordingly, must it be, in a long series of arguments, uniformly to assume, that circumcision *was a privilege in the same sense* as baptism is a privilege ; and to deduce from dispensations and rites, differing so widely in their nature and respective significations, the important conclusion, that though there is evidence of a change of the ordinance on the introduction of Christianity, as there is no law expressly prescribing a change of the subjects to whom it is to be administered, we are warranted in baptizing infants ! What are we to think of arguments, in all of which, the middle or principal term ex. gr. *church, rites, privileges, and subjects*, is ambiguous ; and, of course, necessarily to be understood in different senses ? There are many, you are aware, who in judging of a litigated subject like this, *count* arguments rather than *weigh* them : on such minds, the elaborate inferential reasoning of pædobaptists from the preceding dispensation is calculated to have a very imposing effect ; but I need not remind you, that arguments of the sophistical nature I have pointed out, however numerous, are of no value whatever.

Every positive institute rests on an express divine command ; and unless there be some connexion intimated, it is necessarily independent of every other institute. Since baptism, therefore, was instituted without any connexion being established between it and circumcision, its obligation and circumstances are to be learnt, not from unauthorized inferences from a rite, which having answered the end for which it was instituted, has naturally terminated in the realities of the Gospel ; but from the declared will of the divine Institutor, and the practice of the apostles, in fulfilling their commission.

But some writers have been at great pains, you are probably aware, in endeavouring to connect circumcision, chiefly with a covenant made with Abraham, which they regard as ‘the basis of the new Testament church’ ; with a view to show, that from the rite being *first* attached to *this* covenant, and administered to children, the connexion which originally existed between parents and children, did not cease with the Mosaic economy, but was continued on the introduction of the gospel. Were we, however, to recognize the correctness of the premises from which this important conclusion is deduced ; it must, surely, by all dispassionate inquirers, be regarded as highly improbable, that a point of duty, so necessary to be easily learnt by every Christian, as the nature of his very first act of obedience, should have been left to be ascertained from an intricate process of reasoning, founded on the scanty records we possess of early sacred history,—reasoning involving such nice and perplexing distinctions, that not one plain Christian in a hundred, feels himself competent to form a satisfactory opinion of its validity.

Some of the fallacies that pervade this inferential reasoning, and render the arguments valueless, I have already noticed ; and I may further remind you, that whatever was the nature of the covenant with which circumcision was first connected,

this much is certain, that the rite is commonly spoken of in the new Testament, as essentially Jewish ; so much so, indeed, that we find it frequently used to designate the Jewish people ; and also the Jewish Christians, as distinguished from the Gentile converts. We read, for instance, respecting Peter and others of the apostles, that it was arranged ‘ they should go unto the circumcision,’ namely the Jews, Gal. ii. 9 : we read also of ‘ them that were of the circumcision, (i. e. Jewish believers) contending with Peter.’ Acts xi. 12. But notwithstanding its being thus used by the sacred writers, as a distinguishing title of the Jews, it has been maintained by Dr. Wardlaw, and other pædobaptists, that it is not correct to view the rite as being chiefly an institute of Judaism, inasmuch as its administration was first attached to a covenant made with Abraham, which they hesitate not to call ‘ the gospel covenant’ ! The following is Dr. Wardlaw’s summary of the laboured reasoning he has founded on *his theory* of the Abrahamic covenant. ‘ I have endeavoured to show,’ he says, ‘ that the covenant made with Abraham was the gospel covenant, the covenant of grace under which we live, and which is the basis of the new Testament church :—that the ordinance of circumcision was attached to that covenant, and as the sign of its blessings, and the seal of its promises was, by divine command, administered to children :—that although there is abundant evidence of a change of the rite or ordinance, there is none whatever of any such change in its administration, as excludes children from being any longer the legitimate subjects of its observance.’*

If you have been in the practice, as I trust you have, of studying the historical books of the old Testament in their

* Wardlaw on Infant Baptism, p. 62.

natural order and true design, as *records* of the divine dealings with the successive generations of mankind, you will naturally feel greatly surprised that any should think of grounding an important argument, intended to determine our interpretation of a positive Christian law, on such a fanciful foundation, as the supposed identity of the Abrahamic covenant with 'the gospel covenant, the covenant of grace under which we live.' Nor *would* any one, you may rest assured, ever think of identifying these different covenants, who had not, instead of studying the facts of sacred history in their proper historical place, been scrutinizing them with a view to derive some show of evidence in support of a theory, which does not naturally support itself.

Persons who have been taught to regard Christian theology, as a demonstrative science, (by the way a most pernicious notion)* are apt to conceive of each doctrine of revelation as

* The conversion of Christianity into a learned science, had its origin in the celebrated schools of Alexandria; where Clement, Origen, and others, formed a new body of theology, in which, were united the mystical speculations of Platonism and the simple truths of revelation. As the Christian religion was designed by its Founder, to be wholly unconnected with science, so we find Paul, who having been educated in the school of Gamaliel, was well qualified to judge of the value of human learning, at great pains in impressing on those to whom he wrote, that the gospel he communicated, was learnt not from human tutors, but by immediate revelation;—and warning them of the dangers arising from the perverting influence of a vain philosophy. But by the establishment of a Christian school at Alexandria, in the third century, (the first institution for the education of a clerical order on record) the office of catechist was introduced, whose business was to deliver lectures to different orders of catechumens, in which were communicated the hidden truths supposed to exist in the Christian scheme. This notion of a hidden doctrine, which was first invented at Alexandria, in the third century, was dilated in the fourth, into creeds for the clergy, and a simple catechumen state for the people; and after being amplified beyond bounds by the dialectical science professed in the schools, was reduced at the Reformation, to the compact schemes of systematical theology, in which professional students of divinity are now usually trained. The common practice of teaching young men theology systematically, as if it were a perfect science, which thus had its origin in the system, first taught in the schools of Alexandria, of which the matter was furnished by Plato, and the form ultimately taken from Aristotle, has been a fertile source of presumptuous speculation and doctrinal

capable of being established by processes of reasoning, from principles *assumed as established* in their scholastic system ; and as being thus independent, for the most part, of that divine testimony, by which each article of revealed truth, can alone be satisfactorily and profitably known. On the various intimations communicated to us of the Divine attributes, (of the nature of which, it is erroneously assumed, the human mind is competent adequately to conceive) a scientific scheme of theology is reared ; and in adaptation to this system, the whole of revelation is usually interpreted, as if it were one contemporaneous production. It is chiefly owing to men's minds being completely under the influence of theological systems of this kind, that we find numbers of pious

error in every subsequent age ; and continues to be a principal hindrance to the union of the Christian church. The reason of Scholasticism being so injurious to the cause of Christian truth, according to a recent writer who has elaborately investigated the subject, is not the association of any particular truths of human reason with those of revelation, but the simple fact of *the irrelevance* of all deduction of consequences to *the establishment of religious doctrine*. 'The Scripture intimates to us certain facts concerning the Divine Being ; but conveying them to us by the medium of language, it only brings them before us darkly, under the signs appropriate to the thoughts of the human mind. And though this kind of knowledge is abundantly instructive to us in point of sentiment and action ; teaches us, that is, both how to feel, and how to act, towards God ;—for it is the language we understand, the language formed by our own experience and practice ;—it is altogether inadequate in point of science. The most perfect reasonings founded on the terms of theological propositions, amount only to evidences of the various connexions of the signs employed. We may obtain by such reasonings, greater precision in the use of those signs. But the most accurate conclusion still wants a key to interpret it. There must be in fact a repeated revelation, to authorize us to assert, that this or that conclusion represents to us some truth concerning God.

If then it should appear, that the Scholastic Philosophy was in its fundamental character, a Logical Theology, the nature of that evil which it has imparted into religion, will be sufficiently apparent. And antecedently to our entering into the examination of particular points, the reason will be seen in general, of that vast apparatus of technical terms, which Christian Theology now exhibits. It will appear, that, whilst theologians of the schools have thought they were establishing religious truth by elaborate argumentation, they have been only multiplying and arranging a theological language.' Hampden's *Scholastic Philosophy*, p. 55.

people discovering so readily, and with such undoubting confidence, all the truths of the gospel *clearly* taught in the early historical books of the old Testament. According to the popular views of theology, in fact, taught from many pulpits, and in numerous religious treatises, the various writings that compose the Bible, are all to be interpreted as if the Scriptures were actually one book, written at the same time;—and all its parts with the same design. It is practically forgotten, that God spake by the prophets at different times:—that he addressed successive generations, placed under dispensations, in which was enjoyed very different degrees of light;—and this, during a period of fifteen hundred years. But because religion, as an internal principle, is the same in every age and under every dispensation; and through its not being kept sufficiently in recollection, that looking back, as we do, from a completed revelation, prophecy appears clear to the Christian view, chiefly from its being fulfilled, it is too hastily inferred ‘that the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace under which we live;’ and that the religion of Abraham and others, differed in no respect from that of Christians, except in this, that the one believed in a Saviour promised; the other in a Saviour who has come.

The evils resulting from this unnatural, artificial mode of interpreting Scripture, are more serious than is generally supposed. When we study divine revelation *historically*, in its natural order, we find in it, a record of man’s conduct during the various dispensations under which he has been placed; and we, in this way, learn those principles of the divine character and government, which ought to govern our own views and conduct in life. If we study the Scriptures, on the other hand, as having not *man* chiefly, but *the nature of the Divine being* as their object; and, under this impression, proceed to rear a scientific system on our supposed knowledge of

the divine attributes, we will be under a strong temptation of interpreting the various parts of the sacred volume, precisely in accordance with this preconceived scheme; and without duly considering the various circumstances, under which, each was delivered. With professional theologians and others, whose minds have been duly disciplined under these scholastic systems, distinctions of time, and differences of dispensation, are nearly altogether forgotten. Truths only implied, but really concealed amidst the comparative darkness of the early dispensations, are regarded as truths clearly taught: Christians are thus led to underrate their superior privileges, and to forget their increased responsibility; while unbelievers are naturally offended by strained interpretations of the artless language of the inspired writers.

If you refer to Genesis xii. 1. xv. 5. xvii. 5, where the different appearances of God to Abraham are mentioned, you will, I doubt not, be at a loss to conjecture the grounds, on which it is attempted to identify the covenants there recorded as made with Abraham—with the gospel. Of such an identity no indication is to be found. But Dr. Wardlaw imagines he is countenanced in this strange notion, by the following passage in the Epistle to the Galatians. ‘And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law that was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.’ Gal. iii. 17. 18.* No one, however, who attends to the design of this part of the apostle’s letter, can fail to perceive, that interpreted in accordance with the context, these words furnish no evidence whatever in support of Dr. Wardlaw’s proposition.

* Dr. W. quotes also Rom. iv. 13, 14; but it is not necessary to refer to the passage particularly, as the remarks that follow apply sufficiently to both passages.

We are informed, that as 'known unto God are all his works from the beginning,' various intimations and disclosures of the gospel were granted to those placed under the obscurer dispensations that preceded it. Under the patriarchal dispensation, we find occasionally gospel truths implied—occasionally foreshown; under the law, we find them pre-figured; and by the prophets we find them, in some instances, with remarkable clearness, announced. In opposition to the Judaizing teachers, whose doctrine of justification by the law he was refuting, Paul observes, that even Abraham himself was justified, not by works, but by the gratuitous plan of the gospel, 'by having his faith counted to him for righteousness;' and he adds, that they who imitate the patriarch's faith in believing God, are alone his true sons. 'For the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, communicated the good news to Abraham, long before the law was given; saying, surely in thee, all the nations shall be blessed.' And from this he deduces the conclusion, that all who follow the footsteps of the patriarch, in believing God, shall be blessed with believing Abraham: but that all who trust for justification to the works of the law, remain under its curse.

The apostle's object, in short, was to refute the false teachers, who had been inculcating on the Gentile converts, the doctrines, that justification was to be obtained only by the law of Moses;—and that Christians ought to conform to all the practices of Judaism. In refuting these notions, he asks the Galatians, whether they had received their spiritual gifts by obeying the law, or by believing the gospel? And, in order to overturn the Judaizing doctrine more effectually, he proves that the promise of the nations being blessed in Abraham, of which, the bestowal of these spiritual gifts was the fulfilment, had been originally given to the patriarch *freely*,

without obedience to the law. This promise having been duly ratified, was to all intents and purposes a covenant: surely then, he says, 'as even men presume not to violate covenants, this, which was confirmed to Abraham concerning* the nations being blessed in Christ, cannot be annulled by the law, which was given four hundred and thirty years subsequently.' This appears to be the obvious meaning of the passage quoted by Dr. Wardlaw; and it is evident, there is nothing in the drift of the apostle's argument, or in any of his expressions, to warrant the conclusion that 'the covenant made with Abraham is the same as the Gospel.' The blessings promised through Abraham, and the covenant made with him, are evidently regarded by the apostle as being the same; and his object is to prove, that these blessings were given, not on the condition of obedience to the law, but entirely as a free gift.

It is no doubt true, in one sense, that 'the covenant made with Abraham, was in substance, the same as the covenant of grace, (i. e. a covenant ratifying free and undeserved promises of blessings) inasmuch, as undeserved promises of the divine favour, have been at the foundation of every dispensation of religion since the fall. For no sooner had man forfeited his Maker's favour, than the hope was intimated to him of his recovery. He was not shut out from Paradise, before he was favoured with the prediction of mercy 'through the seed of the woman,' that was appointed to 'bruise the Serpent's head.' This original intimation of divine mercy, was evidently granted as a prelude to those further revelations of the scheme of redemption, which we find gradually revealed, in divers portions, in subsequent ages. And it is obvious, that the prospect of man's redemption, thus early disclosed, is the one

* That *eis* is to be understood here in this sense, see Macknight, in loco. Or see Bloomfield's Greek Testament on the passage, where the sense of *εἰς Χριστόν* is given, 'With respect to Christ and his salvation.'

conspicuous point, that casts such a luminous light on every subsequent revelation of the divine purpose of mercy.

A free promise of blessings, ratified by sacrifice, constitutes a covenant, in the Scriptural sense of the term ; and the promise originally made to Adam, which is at the foundation of all the divine covenants, first obtained this designation, when God announced to Noah, ‘And I, behold I, establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you.’ Gen. ix. 8, 9. At a subsequent period, a similar promise was renewed to Abraham ; which having been ratified by sacrifice, is properly called ‘the covenant made with Abraham ;’—a covenant, it is to be remembered, comprehending blessings both temporal and spiritual, some relating to himself, and others to his posterity.

The call of Abraham constitutes a remarkable epoch in sacred history. Of the important promises with which the patriarch was favoured, the two following stand out conspicuous from others, and seem to include all the rest : viz. the inheritance of Canaan by his *natural* posterity ; and the universal blessing of mankind through his *spiritual* seed, the Messiah.* To this era, accordingly, we can easily trace back

* ‘I have been the more anxious,’ says a late distinguished and much lamented writer, to whom I have been indebted for some of the preceding views, ‘to state precisely the twofold character of prophecy in respect of its subjects, and to fix the sense in which we ought to understand the proper subserviency of the whole of it to the attestation of the Christian faith, on several accounts. First, By this partition of the subjects of prophecy, we shall simplify our view of its structure, and be carried to a truer idea of the use and intent of its several chapters of prediction, as they may hereafter come to be examined. Secondly, we shall exclude the mistaken principle which has infinitely warped the interpretation of it, in the hands of persons of an excellent piety, but an ill instructed judgment ; the principle of endeavouring to expound almost every prophecy, either immediately, or typically, in a Christian sense. This mode of explication, after all arts and temperaments have been applied to it, fails ; and the credit of divine prophecy loses by the detected unskilfulness of the interpreter. The error is one of an early origin in the Christian Church ; and the reproof of it followed ; for it was soon observed to do disservice to the cause of truth ; the adulterated interpretation of the old Testament prophecies, which did not express any thing

the Jewish and Christian dispensations, as to a common point of union. The promise of the land of Canaan issues in the Hebrew people being established in the promised land ; and the Mosaic economy, had the theocratic government and miraculous providence granted to the Israelites, remained unforfeited, would have securely transmitted the original promise to successive generations, till the advent of the Messiah.

As the coming of the promised deliverer was evidently the leading object of all the ancient covenants, so we find that the temporal promises, as well as the religious rites attached to them, were designed to preserve the hope and expectation of the Messiah, and thus gradually to advance the completion of the scheme of redemption. The selection and appointment of a separate people, seem to have been expressly made for the custody and transmission of the divine promises. When subsequent to the deluge, mankind were relapsing speedily into idolatry, Abraham was called out from his relations, and constituted the founder of a particular race, designed to be kept separate from others ; from whom, the Messiah should descend. With this view, a covenant was established with him, having for its leading promise, ‘ In thy

of Christ, or his religion, throwing doubt and suspicion upon the genuine sense of those which did. The prophecies which unquestionably relate to the Gospel are numerous, full, and explicit ; and they require no support from equivocal or forced expositions to be put upon others. There are also mixed or typical prophecies, which combine the Christian with some other analagous subject. But, besides both of these, there are portions of prophecy which must be granted to stop short in their proper Jewish, or other limited subject, without any sense or application beyond it. Thirdly, we shall perceive at the same time, how unnecessary it is to the honour of the gospel, to have recourse to that mistaken principle ; since after all, it is most true, that the Holy Jesus is the Lord of the Prophets ; for they spoke by Spirit, and all that they spoke was but in subserviency to him. For when they ministered to the first dispensation, which had its appendant services of prophecy, yet that dispensation and all its evidences are subordinate to his, and thereby Moses and Elias are witnesses and servants to his proper glory. Davison on Prophecy, p. 88.

seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' The distinguishing features of the promise thus renewed, seem to be comprised in the restriction of the descent of the Deliverer to a particular line of the patriarch's posterity ; and in the additional promises and peculiar rites attached to the covenant. Anterior to this epoch, as the promise had been communicated in general terms—'through the seed of the woman,' the Deliverer must necessarily have descended from Adam—and from Noah, to whom the promise had formerly been made ; but now, as there was a limitation to a particular race, we find, as might be anticipated, that the various religious rites appointed, and, in fact, all the various dealings of God with his chosen people, had for their leading design, the preservation of the race distinct from others, and keeping alive their expectation of the promise they exclusively inherited.

When it is considered then, that circumcision was first enjoined in connexion with the exclusive promise thus made to Abraham—that in him and his posterity all the nations of the earth should be blessed, it is natural to think, that its primary design was to preserve the chosen race a distinct and separate people. Even admitting, therefore, that 'the covenant of grace, which is the basis of the new Testament church,' was at the foundation of the covenant to which the rite was originally attached, it is to be remembered that various other covenants, and, in fact, all the dispensations under which man has been placed since his apostacy, were, in like manner, founded on undeserved promises of the divine favour. But while this was the case, we uniformly find, there was a constitution of things attached to each, adapted to the existing state of the scheme of redemption, and subservient to its ultimate accomplishment.

Whether, accordingly, we consider the covenant established with Abraham, in its connexion with the ancient dispensa-

tions, or as introduced by Paul in proof the gratuitous justification of the gospel; it seems, in either view, alike inaccurate to identify it with 'the gospel covenant, the covenant of grace under which we live.' That God will be the God of the seed of Christians, in the same sense, he engaged to be to the seed of Abraham, forms assuredly no part of the gospel covenant. And I doubt not, you will concur with me in inferring, that the circumstance of a writer, reputed judicious like Dr. Wardlaw, grounding his principal argument in favour of baptizing infants, on a statement so obviously incapable of satisfactory proof, furnishes no slight indication of the pædobaptist system being destitute of any solid foundation.

You are probably aware, that besides this theory of Dr. Wardlaw's, from which such important conclusions are thus confidently deduced, various others have been reared on the brief narrative transmitted to us of patriarchal history: the nature of these, however, it is not necessary for me to explain; or of any of them to attempt either the confutation or defence; for my principal object in adverting to the subject is, to call your attention to the one great medium of proof, by which all these rival or dubious theories can be decisively and satisfactorily tested.

That the nature and extent of Christian duty was clearly communicated to the apostles, all will admit. Being guided 'into all truth,' by 'the Spirit of truth,' and taught 'all things' 'whatsoever Jesus had said unto them,' they were divinely qualified for teaching disciples, 'to observe all things Christ had commanded.' That they were instructed to baptize all of whom they made converts is certain; this being attested alike by the commission they received, and by their practice, as recorded by the sacred writers. The test, then, by which we are to examine the pædobaptist inference is this;—Is there any evidence, that the apostles, instead of adhering to the terms of their commission, interpreted it in

conformity with an intricate process of reasoning, founded on a particular view of a passage in patriarchal history? In other words, do the accounts we possess of the opinions entertained, and of the religious rites practised in new Testament times, accord with the conclusion, 'that though there is abundant evidence of a change of the ordinance, there is no evidence of any change in the subjects to whom it was administered?' Now of the apostles being instructed to interpret the law of baptism, in adaptation to an inference deduced from this, or any other Abrahamic theory, no evidence can be adduced; and that such a supposition is wholly irreconcilable with the facts of sacred history, I shall endeavour, in few words, satisfactorily to show.

It is confidently assumed by Dr. Wardlaw and others, that there is abundant evidence of *a change* of the rite of circumcision for baptism, on the introduction of the gospel; but I must be allowed to ask, where is any of this abundant evidence to be found? That Christian baptism was then instituted as a permanent law of the kingdom of heaven, is certain; but that this ordinance was regarded by the apostles as taking the place of circumcision, is a notion which seems to have no foundation, save the confident assumption of divines.

It seems to be strangely forgotten by many writers, or at all events, carefully kept out of sight, that the kingdom of heaven was in its beginning as 'a grain of mustard seed,' that 'waxed a great tree,' only by gradual and almost imperceptible degrees. That it was ushered into the world without any outward parade, and without exciting general observation, we are taught both by the lessons of our Lord, and by the early records of its rise and progress. That Judaism ceased when Christianity was introduced, is a mistake too glaring to be by any one openly maintained; but it is manifest, that arguments which go to prove that circum-

cision was *changed* for baptism at the beginning of the gospel, so that the one ordinance was actually substituted for the other, derive all their plausibility from the gross fallacy of assuming that such was the case.

It is matter of history, that the Jewish religion was for nearly half a century, so far as appearances were concerned, but in a very slender degree affected by the introduction of the new dispensation. By the bulk of the population of Judea, the existence of Messiah's kingdom was either not known, or not recognized; and we know that those by whom it *was recognized*, namely, the apostles and Jewish converts, continued, after their embracing the gospel, to observe all the prescriptions of the Mosaic law as formerly. They continued to do so as Jewish citizens; while as Christians, they assembled together for religious purposes in obedience to Christ's commands, in each others houses. Acts ii. 46.

Even as regards the apostles, we have every reason to believe, that though they were divinely qualified for the work on which *they were first sent*, their then natural, national error was not immediately, or indeed, for a considerable period afterwards removed:—the error, namely, that the benefits of the Messiah's advent were limited to the subjects of Moses, and were to be obtained only in connexion with Judaism. We are informed, that during the first eight years of their ministry, they taught the gospel in Judea, and in Samaria, to Jews alone: It was, only, by an express revelation, that so late as A. D. 41, the scruples of Peter were removed; and that he was taught, both by this special revelation and by facts, that the privileges of the new covenant were open not only to Jews, but to the devout Gentiles. Nor was it till four years subsequent to this, viz. A. D. 45, that by another express revelation, Paul and Barnabas were directed to communicate the gospel to the idolatrous Gentiles.

Of these three distinct periods, viz. A. D. 33, to A. D. 41 ; from this, to A. D. 45 ; and from this, to A. D. 70 : (when the Jewish polity was dissolved) it is manifest, that the apostles were, during the first, kept in ignorance of the second ; and that, even, when enlightened to understand the second, the third, when it was at last made known, came upon all as an unexpected and most extraordinary revelation of the wonderful counsel of the Lord.*

These important facts of the gradual and comparatively slow extension of the new dispensation to the three different classes of converts mentioned ; and of the apostle's minds being enlightened respecting the divine counsel, only, as these various events took place, seem to be entirely forgotten by those whose arguments proceed on the supposition, that baptism was regarded as *the substitute* of circumcision during the apostolic age. That the Jewish believers continued during the whole of this period, to circumcise their male infants as usual ; and that their practice was sanctioned by the apostles is indubitable ; for we find James and the elders at Jerusalem informing Paul, that the Jews ' who believed ' had conceived a prejudice against him, because it was commonly reported, he taught all the Jews who were among the Gentiles ' not to circumcise their children.' Acts xxi. 21. It is obvious, therefore, that they themselves, must have continued the practice ; otherwise, they could not, in common consistency, have spoken of this rumour as relating exclusively to Paul.

It is to be remembered, moreover, that while the apostles and the Jewish believers thus circumcised their infants as formerly, there is no indication of their anticipating the impending overthrow of the holy city, and the consequent dissolution of the Jewish polity. As the law of Moses was still in

* See on this point, Hind's History of the Rise and Progress of Christianity.

force as the rule of public worship, the daily sacrifices and all the various services of the temple, (in which it is not to be forgotten, the apostles and the other Jewish converts joined) continued to be celebrated with their wonted solemnity. Under these circumstances, it is wholly incredible that the apostles could have entertained or taught the modern pædobaptist doctrine, that baptism was *the appointed substitute* of circumcision. Of the apostles being even aware that circumcision, as a rite of Judaism, was shortly to terminate, there is no proof extant; and that they authoritatively taught its discontinuance, is opposed alike to probability, and to the facts of unquestionable history. For, besides the decisive evidence formerly adduced, we are informed, that even subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem, there was a considerable body of Jewish believers, who refused to relinquish circumcision and the other Mosaic observances.

When these circumstances, together with the other real history of the apostolic age, are kept in view, it seems wholly incredible, that any could at that period have adopted, or acted on, the inferential reasonings by which modern pædobaptists interpret the law of baptism. It seems preposterous to imagine, that the apostles could have entertained the notion ‘that though there is abundant evidence of a change of the rite, there is none whatever of any such change in its administration, as to exclude children from being the legitimate subjects of its observance;’ for, how could they hold this view of *a change of rites*, when circumcision was *not changed at all*? It is obvious, therefore, that tested by the obvious facts of sacred history, Dr. Wardlaw’s inferential reasoning from the Abrahamic covenant, proves necessarily erroneous. A doctrine that clearly contradicts the whole history of the apostolic age, cannot be true.

You will deem it superfluous, perhaps, if I add, that the

notion of the one rite having been regarded as the substitute of the other, seems irreconcilable with the attempt of the Judaizing teachers at Antioch, to impose circumcision on the Gentile converts. For, as these converts had already been baptized, had the two rites been generally regarded in this light, it is inconceivable that the Judaizers would have made the attempt at all: but when they did, the fact of these persons being already baptized, would, doubtless, have been adduced as obviously superseding the necessity of their being also circumcised. We find, however, that when the question was fully debated at Jerusalem, this obviously silencing argument was not once mentioned. See Acts xv.

When we keep these various circumstances in view, it seems incredible, that pædobaptists should attach any importance to a theory, which is so manifestly irreconcilable with the facts of sacred history. But this notion of the one rite being substituted for the other, is usually assumed in their writings as a principle so clearly established, as to admit of no dispute. ‘Precisely the same,’ says Mr. Greville Ewing, ‘is the meaning of circumcision, and the meaning of baptism. But there never were two ordinances of the same signification, the observance of which was enjoined at the same time Since then, the ordinance of circumcision is removed, and the meaning of it is found in the ordinance of baptism, the latter has evidently come in the room of the former.’* But it is obvious, that had baptism come in the room of circumcision in the apostolic age, the former would have ceased when the latter commenced: we have seen, however, that circumcision *did not then cease*; and it has been shown, moreover, that there is no evidence of the early believers being aware of its ever ceasing at all. On the other hand, were this notion of the meaning

* Ewing’s Essay on Baptism. p. 209.

of the two ordinances being so ‘precisely the same,’ that the one was naturally substituted for the other, correct; it follows on pædobaptist principles, that all the male infants of Jewish believers continued for forty years, to have two ordinances administered to them of precisely the same signification. But Mr. Ewing informs us, ‘there never were two ordinances of the same signification, the observance of which was enjoined *at the same time.*’ On this writer’s own principles then, it follows, that these infants were not baptized; for it is matter of unquestionable history, that they were all circumcised.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We thus find, that respecting the positive duty of baptism, the obligation and circumstances of which depend on an express revelation of the divine will, there is not merely the absence of any command to administer the ordinance to infants, as also the absence of any scriptural precedent for the practice; but that the remote relations and inferential reasonings, adduced by pædobaptists in its support, are founded entirely on erroneous interpretations of Scripture; or derive their whole show of plausibility from the fallacy of confounding the ordinances, and peculiar character, of Judaism, with those of Christianity. That there is neither precept nor precedent for infant baptism in Scripture, pædobaptists are obliged to admit; but with a view to counteract the effect of this undeniable truth, Mr. ——— alleges, ‘we have neither precept nor example for a woman partaking of the Lord’s Supper.’ This assertion, however, were it available, as an *argumentum ad hominem* for his purpose, seems advanced on very insufficient grounds.

Of the fact, that females *did* eat the Lord’s Supper, there is abundant and decisive evidence. For it being on all hands admitted, that the term *disciple* comprises all who were baptized, since we read in the book of Acts, that ‘both men and women were baptized,’ it follows, that women come under this designation as much as men. Now, it being on record, that ‘the disciples’ came together to break bread on the first

day of the week at Troas, since women are undeniably designated ‘disciples,’ there is the same evidence of them eating the Supper, as there is of men’s eating it. Besides, it is certain there were female members in the church at Corinth, there being repeated mention made of women in Paul’s Epistles to that church. As the apostle, therefore, delivered the Lord’s Supper, and the other ordinances, to the church at Corinth, without any exception, he must have delivered it to women as well as to men. It is thus sufficiently clear, that for the practice in question, there is both precept and example. Let Mr. — produce evidence equally decisive as this, in proof of infant baptism, and he will find few, if any, to call its divine authority in question ; but he may rest assured, that cavilling objections of this kind, are little calculated to do any cause service. That ‘we have no express and explicit authority for the admission of women to the Lord’s Supper, says another advocate of pædobaptism, ‘has always appeared to me, ground hardly consistent with manly fairness and candour ; and calculated to enfeeble rather than strengthen, to expose to a sneer rather than recommend to acceptance, the cause it is meant to support.’*

Mr. — adds, ‘but, as we never for a moment suppose, that for want of this, women are to be excluded ; so we are not to suppose, that on such ground, infants are to be denied baptism.’ As there is no want of either precept, or example, for women eating the Supper, it is not correct to say, that *it* is on such grounds, infants are denied baptism. The grounds of the denial are very different : they consist in the absence of precept, of precedent, and of all authority whatever.

The last statement I find in this note is, that as ‘women are included in the more general terms : ‘man,’ ‘mankind,’

* Wardlaw on Infant Baptism, p. 5.

‘disciples,’ &c. children are included in the general terms ‘household,’ ‘family,’ &c. You are aware, I doubt not, that the recorded fact of the apostles baptizing ‘households,’ is regarded by many, as furnishing important evidence on the point at issue; but on what slender grounds, this notion is entertained, a slight consideration of the circumstances of the case, may suffice to show.

It is freely admitted, that it is possible, nay probable, there were children in some of the households mentioned: and there can, of course, be no objection to include children in the number of those baptized, if they were of sufficient age, and actually professed their faith in the gospel.* To include unconscious infants, however, is a mere begging of the question: for it admits of no proof that there *were* infants in these households; or supposing this, it still remains to be proved, that such infants were baptized. This much is indubitable, that what is recorded respecting the households in question, namely, their ‘fearing God,’ ‘addicting themselves to the ministry of the saints,’ ‘rejoicing and believing in God,’ &c. applies to intelligent agents, but not to unconscious infants. Every one on reflection, must perceive, that these family baptisms can be regarded as furnishing evidence in favour of pædobaptism, only by those, who *assume* the certainty of the very point in debate; and who accordingly, allow their imaginations to conceive, that it was as common for the apostles to baptize infants, as it is common to hear of them being baptized now. But let such allow their imaginations to conceive also, that the apostles acted conformably to their commission, (which is the correct conception) and that the baptizing of unconscious infants, was an idea that never once entered their minds.

* It consists with my knowledge, that children, as young as nine or ten, are occasionally baptized at the present day, on a profession of their faith.

When all the members of a family embraced the gospel, they were baptized, and the fact is recorded : but in narrating a circumstance of this kind, it would not be deemed necessary formally to except infants. It is obvious, that expressions of this general nature, are universally understood as applying to those only to whom they are supposed to relate ; and not to others, who by all, are regarded as being out of the question.

By many pædobaptists, however, the circumstance of the apostles baptizing households, is represented as furnishing evidence in their favour, both obvious and decisive : it is accordingly, adduced frequently as their leading evidence. ‘ Nothing can be more direct and obvious,’ says Mr. Greville Ewing, ‘ than the argument from Scripture for infant baptism As the reader is probably aware, I refer to the well known fact, that according to the history of the Acts of the Apostles, baptism was administered to believers and their houses.’* On some minds, positive assertions like this, produce an equal effect with powerful arguments ; though they are often nothing more than a substitute for weak ones. But let us see in what light, this ‘ direct and obvious evidence’ is regarded by another pædobaptist, the late Mr. Coleridge. ‘ I have, I confess, no eye,’ says Coleridge, ‘ for these smoke like wreaths of inference, this ever widening spiral *Ergo*, from the narrow aperture of perhaps a single text : or rather an interpretation forced into it, by construing an idiomatic phrase in an artless narrative, with the same absoluteness as if it had formed part of a mathematical problem ! I start back from these inverted pyramids, where the apex is the base ! If I should inform any one that I had called at a friend’s house,

* Ewing on Baptism, p. 179.

but had found nobody at home, the family having all gone to the Play ; and if he, on the strength of this information, should take occasion to asperse my friend's wife for unmotherly conduct, in taking an infant, six months old, to a crowded theatre ; would you allow him to press on the words *nobody* and *all* the family, in justification of the slander ? Would not you tell him, that the words were to be interpreted by the nature of the subject, the purpose of the speaker, and their ordinary acceptance ? And that he must, or might have known, that infants of that age would not be admitted into the theatre ? Exactly so, with regard to the words ' he and all his household.' Had baptism of infants, at that early period of the gospel, been a known practice, or had this been previously demonstrated,—then indeed, the argument, that in all probability, there was one or more infants, or young children, in so large a family, would be no otherwise objectionable than as being superfluous, and a sort of anticlimax in logic. But if the words are cited as *the* proof, it would be a clear *petitio principii*, though there had been nothing else against it. But when we turn back to the Scriptures preceding the narrative, and find repentance and belief demanded, as the terms and indispensable conditions of baptism—*then* the case above imagined, applies in its full force.*

* Coleridge's Aids to Reflection. p. 358.—Perhaps the remainder of the paragraph will interest you, as it gives Coleridge's views of the pædobaptist arguments, founded on the supposed connexion between baptism and circumcision. He continues, ' Equally vain is the pretended analogy from circumcision, which was no Sacrament at all ; but the means and mark of national distinction. In the first instance, it was doubtless, a privilege or mark of superior rank, conferred on the descendants of Abraham. In the patriarchal times, this rite was confined (the first governments being Theocracies) to the priesthood, who were set apart to that office from their birth. At a later period, this token of the *premier class* was extended to kings. And thus, when it was recorded by Moses for the whole Jewish nation, it was at the same time said—' Ye are all priests and kings—ye are a consecrated people.' In addition to this, or rather in aid of this, circumcision was intended to distinguish the Jews by some indelible sign : and it was no

You will perceive, that I have not attempted to found any argument on these households; for the baptism of professed believers of the gospel, being the sole point I am concerned in maintaining, I find sufficient authority for this practice in the commission given to the apostles;—and these cases of baptized households, as well as all the other baptisms recorded in Scripture, are in entire accordance with the terms of this commission. With respect to these families accordingly, I merely stand on the defensive; and it is sufficient, if I can show, that they do not necessarily prove the baptism of infants. It is for pædobaptists to adduce positive evidence that this took place, and until evidence to this effect is produced, it is a sufficient answer to objections founded on the probability of there being infants in these families, that *it might be otherwise*.

But I wish you to notice too, that I do not attempt to prove, there were no infants in any of these families: for I consider it quite immaterial whether or no such was the case. The material point is, that the households recorded as having been *baptized*, are described as ‘believing’ households. Of the Philippian jailor, for instance, we read, ‘he believed in God with all his house:’ and respecting the house of Stephanas, we learn ‘they addicted themselves to the ministry of the

less necessary that Jewish children should be recognizable as Jews, than Jewish adults—not to mention the greater safety of the rite in infancy. Nor was it ever pretended that any grace was conferred with it; or that the rite was significant of any inward or spiritual operation. In short, an unprejudiced and competent reader, need only peruse the first 33 paragraphs of the 18th Section of Taylor’s Liberty of Prophesying; and then compare with these, the remainder of the section, added by him after the Restoration: those, namely, in which he *attempts* to overthrow his own arguments. I had almost said *affects*: for such is the feebleness, and so palpable the sophistry of his answers, that I find it difficult to imagine, that Taylor himself could have been satisfied with them. The only plausible arguments apply with equal force to baptist and pædobaptist; and would prove, if they prove any thing, that both were wrong, and the Quakers only in the right.’

saints.' This does not prove, there were no infants in these houses ; but it proves undeniably, there were other individuals *who believed*, besides the head of the family. On the supposition then, that there *were* infants in these families, pædobaptists will not contend, *they* were included in the number of those described as 'believers.' Now, if infants are not to be understood as being included in *a household*, described as *believers* ; on the same ground, when the baptism of a family is recorded, we may admit there *might be* infants in the house, without their being included in the number who were *baptized*.

In fine, the evidence respecting these households, may be stated thus :—No one will maintain that the terms employed by the inspired writers, *necessarily* imply infants ; and of infants being included, no other evidence exists : but, supposing there were infants in these families, which is quite possible ; as it is a universal practice to use general expressions without making special exceptions of those whom every one considers out of the question, infants would, in that case, be naturally excepted by the terms of the apostolic commission. To include infants, therefore, in the number of those baptized, derives no support from evidence, and is consistent neither with fact nor probability.

But Mr. ——— thinks, 'there is no reason to suppose that the privilege given to the Jewish children, of being admitted into the visible church, by a significant visible rite, should be refused to *Christian* children ; that is children of Christian parents ;' that, on the contrary, as Christ says, 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' and says, that such belong to the gospel church, 'of such is the kingdom of heaven ;' if they belonged to the gospel church, why ought they not to be introduced visibly to the gospel church ?' Misled by false or loose analogies, Mr. ——— thus deduces an inference from Judaism, and applies it to 'the gospel church,' as if the two dis-

pensations were so much the same, as to render such reasoning valid. The confounding of the old covenant with the new, which is here so apparent, you will, no doubt, have already perceived, is a fallacy that pervades and pollutes his whole reasoning on this part of the subject. It is obvious that the mere circumstance of the Jews being designated ‘the church of God,’ does not render it warrantable, to deduce inferences from the Mosaic covenant, and apply them to Christianity. The church of Israel was the nation of Israel; and by its very constitution, recognized the membership of every citizen, without respect to his religious sentiments or spiritual state. The christian church, on the other hand, is not composed of nations, but of individuals chosen out of different nations; and it recognizes by its constitution, the membership of those only, who repent and believe the gospel. To conclude then, that because every male infant born in Judea, received circumcision—a rite which implying no distinction of character, introduced the whole population into the Jewish covenant; infants, both male and female, ought now to receive baptism—a rite which implies that the individual is washed from his sins through believing the gospel, must necessarily be alike fallacious and futile.

With respect to Christ’s words, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,’ it is difficult to conceive what evidence they can be supposed to furnish in favour of *baptizing* infants. That ‘such belong to the gospel church,’ in the sense, that infants are actually members of the Christian church, has been ‘said,’ neither by Christ, nor by any one else in Scripture. The expression ‘of such’ clearly denotes that teachableness and humility of disposition, by which children are distinguished; and we are elsewhere taught, that ‘whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not

enter therein." If the words in question, are to be interpreted as having any bearing on the subject, they seem to furnish presumptive evidence *against* infant baptism rather than *in its favour*; for had it been a common practice, at that time, to bring infants *to be baptized*, it seems inconceivable that the disciples should have 'rebuked' those who brought them to Christ, simply *to be blessed*. We clearly learn, however, from the circumstances recorded, that infants may receive a blessing from the Saviour, without being baptized.

But were we, in opposition to this presumptive evidence, to regard the passage as favouring the baptism of infants, it is obvious, that as the words do not distinguish the infants of believers from those of unbelievers, we could not infer the right of the former to baptism, any more than that of the latter. These infants, however, we learn, were not brought to Christ to be baptized, but that 'he should put his hands on them and pray.' And to every reflecting mind it must appear very unaccountable, on the supposition of infant baptism having been designed to be an institution of Christ's kingdom, that it was not, on an occasion like this, expressly sanctioned either by word or example;—the more especially, when we remember how common it was for the Saviour to communicate instruction in connexion with the casual occurrences of life. As our Lord, however, (who must have foreseen the disputes that were to arise on the point) neither baptized these infants, nor instructed his disciples to baptize them, nor on this peculiarly appropriate occasion, gave the slightest intimation that infants were to be baptized at a future period, it is natural to infer, that infant baptism was not designed to be an ordinance of 'the kingdom of heaven.'

But Mr. ——— seems to be of opinion, that though Christ 'did not baptize the children whom he called to him,' the reason was, 'his mediatorial work was not complete,' and that, 'it

was after all was finished, he gave the *special* commission, 'go and teach all nations, baptizing them,' &c. or more properly translated, 'go and make disciples of all nations,' &c. intimating that they were to bring, or procure, or induce mankind, to become scholars of Christ, at the same time baptizing them.' By which, I presume, he intends to convey the meaning, that infants were included in the apostolic commission; and that as the word μαθητευσατε signifies to *make disciples*, infants are to be made disciples by baptism, and to be taught afterwards. In refutation of this view, nothing requires to be added to the following remarks of two learned pædobaptist writers on the passage. '*Teach all nations,*' Μαθητευειν here,' says Dr. Whitby, 'is to preach the gospel to all nations,' and to engage them to believe it, in order to their profession of that faith by baptism; as seems apparent:—1st. From the parallel commission, Mark xvi. 15. '*Go preach* the gospel to every creature; *he that believeth* and is baptized shall be saved.' 2nd. From the Scripture notion of a *disciple*, that being still the same as a believer. If here it should be said, that I yield too much to the anti-pædobaptists, I desire any one to tell me, how the apostles could μαθητευειν, make a disciple of a heathen, or unbelieving Jew, without being μαθητοι, or teachers of them? whether they were not sent to preach to those that could hear, and to teach them to whom they preached, that *Jesus was the Christ*, and only to baptize them when they did believe this?*' 'As for those,' says Richard Baxter, 'that say they are disciplined by baptizing, and not before baptizing, they speak not the sense of that text; nor that which is true or rational, if they mean absolutely as so spoken; else why should one be baptized more than another? This is not like some occasional his-

* Whitby in loco.

torical mention of baptism, but it is the very commission of Christ to his apostles for preaching and baptizing, and purposely expresseth their several works, in their several places and order. Their first task is, by teaching to make disciples, which, by Mark, are called *believers*. The second work is to baptize them, whereto is annexed the promise of their salvation. The third work is, to teach them all other things, which are afterwards to be learnt in the school of Christ. To condemn this order, is to renounce all rules of order; for where can we expect to find it, if not here? I profess, my conscience is fully satisfied from this text, that it is one sort of faith, even saving, that must go before baptism: and the profession whereof, the minister must expect.*

Mr. — refers to a passage in the Acts of the Apostles, you will have noticed, as being remarkably *clear* in favour of his views: ‘besides this,’ he says, ‘see that clear and striking passage, Acts ii. 38, 39;’ but I cannot perceive that the words referred to, when interpreted in accordance with their context, furnish any evidence whatever on the subject. The apostle Peter, in telling the Jews that ‘the promise is to you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call,’ evidently alludes to what he had previously quoted from the prophet Joel in the sixteenth verse; and it is obvious that the promise in question, is not that of salvation in general, but of the gifts of the Spirit, which, on that memorable occasion, were so signally bestowed. The promise, accordingly, it is natural to think, primarily refers to this effusion of miraculous gifts; but if the ordinary influence of the spirit were included, it does not follow, that by ‘children,’ we must necessarily understand ‘infants.’ For when we look back to the original prophecy in Joel, we find

* Disputat. of Right to Sacraments.

in the same chapter from which these words are cited, 'children,' and 'those that suck the breasts,' mentioned in juxtaposition, and classed separately. See Joel i. 16. The term 'children,' every one knows, frequently occurs in Scripture as denoting 'posterity,' without reference to age; and that it is to be understood here in this sense, is obvious, both from the persons to whom the promise refers being termed 'sons and daughters,' (Acts ii. 17,) and also from the concluding clause of the thirty-ninth verse, 'even to as many as the Lord our God *shall call*.'

I may mention, that instead of this being generally regarded as 'a clear and striking passage' in favour of infant baptism; numerous pædobaptist writers of distinction, admit it has no reference to the subject. 'These words,' says Dr. Whitby, 'will not prove the right of infants to receive baptism. The promise here being that only of the Holy Ghost, mentioned in verses 16, 17, 18; and so relating only to the times of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost, and to those persons, who by age, were made capable of these extraordinary gifts.*' 'If any,' says Dr. Hammond, 'have made use of that very inconcludent argument (viz. from Acts ii. 39.) I have nothing to say in defence of them; the word *children* there, is really *the posterity* of the Jews, and not peculiarly their infant children.†' 'He that whenever the word children occurs in Scripture,' says Jeremy Taylor, 'shall by *children*, understand *infants*, must needs believe, that in all Israel there were no men, but all were infants; and if that had been true, it had been the greater wonder they should overcome the Anakins, and beat the King of Moab, and march so far, and discourse so well, for they were all called the *children* of

* Comment. in loco.

† Works, Vol. 1. p. 490.

Israel.* Taylor is here professedly stating the arguments against infant baptism ; but there is reason to think, he only expressed his own sentiments, when he characterized the opposite view of the passage as interpreting the words ‘on a weak mistake.’

The last passage adduced by Mr. —, as countenancing the baptism of infants, is 1 Cor. vii. 4 ; and I doubt not, you will at once perceive, that the same fallacy of blending Judaism with Christianity, which I have had occasion so frequently to notice, is glaringly manifest here. He assumes, that the state of the Christian church, and the relation of its subjects to God, are so much the same with those of the Jewish church, as to warrant the supposition that parents are spoken of in this passage as being *holy* by profession ; and that their children, accordingly, are to be ‘reckoned holy in this sense of the term, without reference to, or rather in distinction from, holiness of heart and life ; just as the Jews were called a *holy nation* by profession, though many of them were far from being holy in soul and spirit.’ Proceeding on this fallacious assumption, he arrives at the conclusion, that ‘on the ground of parents being holy by outward profession, children are [to be] admitted to an outward holy ordinance,’ namely, I presume, the ordinance of baptism.

In briefly remarking on this view, I must again, though necessarily, I fear, with some slight repetition, solicit your attention to the obvious inaccuracy of regarding the Jewish and Christian churches, and the relation of their respective subjects to God, as being *the same*. It is to be remembered, that the term *holy* was applied to the nation of the Jews, as a whole ;—to the people, whether pious or not, whether good or bad : and that every citizen, if free from legal impurity, was not only per-

* Liberty of Prophesying, Sect. xviii.

mitted, but commanded, to participate in the different rites of his religion. Three times a year, the whole male population were enjoined to appear before Jehovah, to keep the appointed feasts, whatever might be their religious knowledge or spiritual character.

The Epistle in which the passage in question occurs, on the other hand, is addressed ‘to the church of God at Corinth;’—to a society composed of individuals, who had been all washed from their sins by baptism into the faith of the gospel:—who had been all ‘justified’ and ‘sanctified’—called out of the world, and in religious matters, separated by their profession of Christianity, from all who were not their joint professors, however nearly connected with them, in the civil and natural relations of life. In their collective capacity, these individuals were constituted the temple of God, in which He dwelt by his Spirit; and we find, they were solemnly warned, that whoever ‘defiled this holy temple, him would God destroy.’ When one of their number, accordingly, was found guilty of this profanation, the society was commanded ‘to put away from them, that wicked person.’ Now, to confound societies of this purely spiritual character, with the Jewish theocracy; and to imagine, that parents under both, are *holy* by outward profession *in the same sense*; so that infants are to be admitted to holy ordinances, as much in the one case as in the other, seems contrary alike to reason and to Scripture.

Were this view of the passage, indeed, to be admitted as proving any thing in favour of the *baptism* of infants, it is difficult to conceive, how it must not be equally valid in proof of the right of infants to *the Lord’s Supper*. For as all Jewish children who were circumcised, had a right to the passover; if ‘fæderal holiness’ gives a right under the gospel to *one* ordinance, why does it not give a right to *all*? This natural inference, however, Mr. — will, of course refuse

to admit ; but I need not remind you, that an argument which proves too much, proves nothing.

When it is considered that baptism is not the subject of which the apostle is here treating, not being once mentioned or referred to in the whole chapter, it seems very strained and unnatural, to found on the passage, any argument respecting that ordinance. The words plainly refer, not to the connexion between parents and children as being in covenant with God, but to the duties of the marriage relation, in the case of a Christian's being united to an unbeliever. The apostle had been asked, whether a Christian, who had an unbelieving wife, was justified in retaining her, or obliged to put her away, as the Jews were directed to do, by the law of Moses. His reply is, ' if any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away ;' and he assigns as a reason, that the ' unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.' This sanctification of the unbelieving wife, it is natural to think, must mean her being a truly wedded wife, on the ground of mutual affection ; for we cannot conceive her, so long as she remained an unbeliever, capable of *Christian* sanctification or holiness. The apostle adds, that ' were it otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now are they holy.' Of course, if the term ' sanctified' express that which constitutes the marriage relation, the words *unclean* and *holy*, must be understood as signifying *spurious* and *lawful*. This interpretation of the terms harmonizes satisfactorily with the apostle's design, which was to prove, that the converted party had no reason to be uneasy on account of being married to a person who was not a Christian, inasmuch as their union being authorized by the law of marriage, they were mutually sanctified, (i. e. set apart) the one to the other ; and it is well known, that in the idiom of the Hebrews, by *sanctified*, was understood what was fitted

for use ; and by *unclean*, the reverse. From the circumstances of the case, indeed, it is manifest, that the sanctification or holiness spoken of, must be materially different from that under the old covenant. For, when a Jew married a Gentile woman, the children were not reckoned holy ; (Ezra ix. 2. Neh. ix. 2,) and the people were commanded to put away their heathen wives, even after they had children by them. Respecting the case of a Christian convert who had married an idolator, on the other hand, the apostle assures us, that as the marriage is lawful, so are the children holy ;—and that there is nothing in Christianity, which requires the parties to separate. This, in my view, is the natural meaning of the words viewed in connexion with the context ; but whatever may be their precise import, (and I am far from maintaining that this interpretation is not open to some plausible objections) this much seems sufficiently clear, that no legitimate argument can be founded on them, in support of infant baptism as an institute of Christianity.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In concluding his notes, Mr. — remarks, that ‘the abuse of this divine ordinance of infant baptism, which prevails to such an awful extent in the Episcopal and Romish churches, is no argument against the right and Scriptural use of it.’ You are aware, it is by every one granted, that the abuse of an ordinance is no valid argument against its proper use, and much less against its divine authority; but it is deserving of notice, that while, in the eyes of strict Presbyterians, infant baptism seems seriously abused both by Romanists and Episcopalians, it is undeniable, that the practice of these communities, however much at variance with the standards of the church of Scotland, is much more in accordance than that of Presbyterians themselves, with the sentiments that prevailed on the subject, when the mention of the baptism of children, first occurs in ecclesiastical history. The relation of infant baptism to the Abrahamic covenant—the theory of ‘fœderal holiness,’ and similar notions, now usually advanced by Calvinistic divines in support of their practice, are comparatively of modern use: they seem to have been invented a little more than two centuries ago, and were found peculiarly adapted to a particular system of theology and ecclesiastical polity then in vogue; but however ingeniously contrived, this much is certain, that they derive no countenance from the records of Christian antiquity. We search in vain the pages of the early fathers, for the doc-

trine of children having a claim to holy ordinances from their relation to the Abrahamic covenant, or from 'their parents being holy by outward profession.' These doctrines were evidently invented in support of an adopted practice; instead of infant baptism being deduced from these doctrines. For though it is unquestionable, that the custom of baptizing children or very young persons obtained, in some degree, as early as the beginning of the third century, it is equally certain, that the practice was not advocated by its first supporters, on such grounds at all; but on the universally prevailing opinion of baptism being essential to salvation. The passage adduced in its support was John iii. 5; and in like manner, John vi. 53, was adduced in support of infant communion: for it is matter of history, that the practice of giving children the Lord's Supper, was nearly contemporaneous with that of baptizing them. According to the traditions of the church, which it is to be remembered were recognized at that time by all as authoritative, both ordinances were regarded as essential to salvation. 'Without baptism and partaking of the Lord's Supper,' says Augustin, 'none can come to the kingdom of God or eternal life.' Along with this tradition, the notion of the outward efficacy of these ordinances prevailed; and as the salvation of every one to whom they were administered, was deemed secure, (if they did not sin afterwards) every encouragement was given in cases of urgency, such as alarming sickness, to observe baptism; so much so, that the ceremony was recognized as valid, even when performed by a layman, or by a female. We find, in conformity with this, that in urgent cases, the ceremony is allowed to be performed by persons not in orders, and by women, by the churches of Rome and England at the present day. 'The ancient church from the highest antiquity after the apostolic times,' says Vitranga, 'appears generally to have thought that baptism is absolutely

necessary for all that would be saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. It was, therefore, customary in the ancient church, if infants were greatly afflicted or in danger of death; or if parents were greatly affected with a singular concern about the salvation of their children, to present them to the bishop to be baptized. But if these reasons did not urge them, they thought it better, and more for the interest of minors, that their baptism should be deferred till they arrived at a more advanced age; which custom was not yet abolished in the time of Austin, though he vehemently urged the necessity of baptism; while, with all his might, he defended the doctrines of grace against Pelagius.* So that from 'the opinion prevailing,' says Salmasius, '*that no one could be saved without being baptized, the custom arose of baptizing infants.*' At no time, however, was baptism performed without a personal profession of faith, either made by the individual himself, or by some person acting as his proxy. For we have it on the authority of Tertullian, that the use of sponsors is of as high antiquity as the practice of infant baptism; and, as every one knows, he is the first by whom infant or minor baptism and sponsors are mentioned.

Of these sponsors, there were three sorts: the first for infants who could not answer properly for themselves; the second for adults incapable of answering on account of great affliction: and lastly, adults in general. Every one must admit, that the practice of the churches of Rome and England, in baptizing all who apply, without reference to their connexion with believing parents, but requiring* godfathers

* In the Church of England Catechism, to the question, 'What is required of persons to be baptized?' the answer is, 'Repentance and faith.' 'Why then' it is added, 'are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?' '*Because they promise both by their sureties.*' This reason obviously implies, that it is on the supposition of a *personal* profession, that baptism is administered, whether in the case of adults or infants. In the Prayer book of Edward VI. the questions in the office for baptism, 'Dost thou renounce,' &c. were put, not to the sponsors, but to the child.

and godmothers to answer in their place, though deriving no support from Scripture, is countenanced by early antiquity. We are assured, indeed, by Dr. Wall, that there is no time or age of the church in which there is any appearance that infants were ordinarily baptized, without sponsors or god-fathers. No one will maintain, that so much can be advanced in favour of the grounds, on which the baptism of infants is usually maintained by Calvinistic divines. It was, in fact, Zuinglius, the Swiss Reformer, who first, according to Cartrou a learned Roman Catholic writer, changed the ground. Zuin-glius rested the practice, this author informs us, on 'a certain covenant, which, in an early age of the world, the Almighty made with Abraham the Chaldean,' in which covenant, in his view, the Swiss Protestant cantons, the Protestants of Geneva, and all others, God's chosen people, *with their infants*, were included. On the same ground, accordingly, Calvin and his followers, the churches of Scotland, of Holland, and Geneva, as also the Swiss cantons, placed infant baptism; defending it, also, by various detached passages of Scripture, as well as by penal statutes enforced by the civil power.*

You are probably aware, that I feel little inclined to attach

* Dr. Wall, among other remarks on a quotation from Augustin, states, 'From this place, one may observe, that the ancients did not in the baptizing of children, go by that rule which some Presbyterians, (he might have added, and some Independents) would establish, viz. that none are to be baptized but the children of parents actually godly and religious. For he, (Augustin) speaks of the case of a child, born of parents who were Heathens or enemies of Christ, being found in the streets and baptized, as a *common instance*. And in his epistle to Auxilius, a young bishop, who had rashly excommunicated a whole family for the parent's crimes, he desires him to show a reason, if he can, how a son, a wife, a slave, can justly be excommunicated for the fault of the father, husband, or master. And then adds: 'Or any one in that family that is not yet born, but may be born during the excommunication; so that he cannot, if in danger of death, be relieved by the laver of regeneration,'—namely, baptism. 'Bishop Stillingfleet has fully shown the absurdity and inconsistency of this opinion of such Presbyterians: and how they can never in many cases that may be put, come to a resolution or agreement what children may be baptized, and what

undue importance to the sentiments of the early church on this, or any similar question. The authority which ought to govern our religious obedience, is to be found in the Scriptures of infallible truth, and not in the dubious practices of past ages. It is obvious, that were we to recognize the authority of the church in the tradition of infant baptism, we must, in common consistency, recognize its authority also in the practice of infant communion; as well as its various other innovations. Every one will admit, however, that the testimony of early antiquity, though it is not to be recognized as authoritative, constitutes matter of peculiar interest; and ought to harmonize with our conclusions from Scripture.

But that it is much easier on the supposition of infant baptism being unknown in new Testament times, to account for its introduction in the third and fourth centuries, than to account for the facts of early history, on the supposition of the practice being of apostolic origin, seems very clear. It is natural to think, that had it been practised by the apostles, we should have had no difficulty in tracing its footsteps from the beginning; and it is very improbable that, at any time, a single person would have presumed to call its authority in question. But of the writers next to the apostles, Barnabas, Hermas, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius and Polycarp, there is not one who mentions the practice; and the same may be affirmed of Justin Martyr, Athenogaras, Irenæus and Clemens of Alexandria, who constitute the writers of the second century. So that 'in the first two centuries of the

not: and has cleared the grounds of baptism from such scruples. And as for the text, 1 Cor. vii. 14, on which they build those scruples, I have shown that the ancients do understand it in a sense much more plain and natural, and more agreeable to the scope of St. Paul's arguing there, which gives no such foundation for any such scruples. And we see by the instances there brought, and many other, that they willingly baptized any infants, if the parents, or any other that were owners, or possessors of such infants, showed so much faith in Christ, as to desire baptism for them.'—Wall's Hist. Vol. II. p. 211.

church,' as Cercullæus remarks, 'the baptism of infants was altogether unknown: while in the third and fourth centuries, it was allowed by *some few*; and in the fifth and following ages, it was generally received.' And though it became common thus early, it was by no means universal, as undoubtedly would have been the case, had it been generally regarded as of apostolic origin. Jeremy Taylor states, 'that there is no feature of tradition, that the church in all ages did baptize all the infants of Christian parents. It is more certain that they did not do it always, than that they did it in the first age.' He adds, that Ambrose, Jerome, and Austin, are all cases of persons born of Christian parents and not baptized, till the age of manhood. And to these may be added, Gregory Nazianzen, born 318, of Christian parents, whose father was a bishop; and Chrysostom, born also of Christian parents, in 347. The former was not baptized till about thirty, nor the latter till about twenty-one years of age. These cases seem wholly unaccountable, on the supposition of pædobaptism being practised and enjoined by the apostles; and it is hardly less unaccountable and strange on this supposition, that the first writer by whom the baptism of children, or very young persons, is mentioned, should disapprove of the practice, and advise its being deferred.

It is deserving of notice, moreover, that though children seem to have been occasionally baptized in the beginning of the third century, there exists no unequivocal evidence of the baptism of *unconscious infants* at so early a date. Tertullian speaks not of babes, but of little ones, (*parvuli*) who were capable of *asking* for baptism. 'It is most expedient,' he says, 'to defer baptism, and to regulate the administration of it according to the condition, the disposition, and the age of the person to be baptized; and especially in the case of little ones. What necessity is there to expose sponsors to danger? Death may

incapacitate them for fulfilling their engagements, or bad dispositions may defeat all their endeavours. Indeed, the Lord saith, forbid them not to come unto me : and let them come while they are grown up, let them come and learn, and let them be instructed when they come ; and when they understand Christianity, let them profess themselves Christians. Why should that innocent age hasten to the remission of sins ? People act more cautiously in secular affairs. They do not commit the care of divine things to such as are not intrusted with temporal things. They just know how *to ask for salvation*, that you may seem to give to him that asketh. It is for a reason equally important, that unmarried women, both virgins and widows, are kept waiting, either till they marry, or are confirmed in a habit of chaste single life. Such as understand the importance of baptism, are afraid of presumption more than of procrastination ; and faith alone secures salvation.*' It is evident that what is here supposed of the little ones in question, namely, that though they might make the request, they were not competent to understand the nature of baptism, applies to young children, but not to new-born infants.

The place where the baptism of these young persons first makes its appearance, is Africa ; and we find in accordance

* ' Pro cujusque personæ conditione, ac dispositione, etiam ætate, cunctatio baptismi utilior est : præcipue tamen circa parvulos. Quid enim necesse est sponsoris etiam periculo ingeri ? Quia et ipsi per mortalitatem destituere promissiones suas possunt, et proventu malæ indolis falli. Ait quidem dominus, Nolite illos prohibere ad me venire. Veniant dum discunt, dum quo veniant docentur ; fiant Christiani, quum christum nosse potuerint. Quid festinat innocens ætas ad remissionem peccatorum ? Cautius agetur in secularibus, ut cui substantia terrena non creditur, divina credatur. Norint petere salutem, ut petenti dedisse videaris. Non minori de causa, innupti quoque procrastinandi, in quibus tentatio præparata est, tam virginibus per maturitatem, quam viduis per vacationem, donec aut nubant, aut continentiae corroborentur. Si qui pondus intelligant baptismi, magis timebunt consecutionem, quam dilationem : fides integra segura est de salute. Tertul. de Baptismo.

with this view of the passage, that young children are subsequently mentioned as forming a part of the church at Carthage. 'There were in the church there,' says an African bishop, named Victor, 'when Eugenio was bishop, a great many little infants (*infantuli*) *readers*, who rejoiced in the Lord, and suffered persecution with the rest of their brethren.' And, in another place, the same writer mentions, that when a great many Christians were fleeing into exile, many *little infants* accompanied them, *crying*, 'We are Christians, we are Catholics, we believe in the trinity.' The testimony furnished by the passage in Tertullian, seems in short to be simply this: Quintilla, a lady of fortune, in Phrygia, having pleaded with the African bishop for the baptism of children—children, it is to be remembered, who personally asked to be baptized, and who produced sponsors, Tertullian, on various grounds, disapproved of the practice, chiefly urging, that they who knew what baptism meant, had reason, in such a case, to be afraid of presumption rather than of delay.

The term *infant*, it ought to be kept in mind, was used in ancient times with considerable latitude of meaning. The words $\piαις$, $\betaρεφος$, *puer*, *parvulus*, *infans*, *infantulus*, and various others, were all employed to designate *minors*, whether real infants, young children, or infants at law. It is necessary, therefore, when any early writer mentions pædobaptism, to ascertain in what sense the term is used. The word infant it is obvious, may signify a new born babe; a boy of six or seven, or of fourteen years of age, or even an infant at law, upwards of twenty. What the actual age, in any instance is, cannot be learnt from the mere occurrence of the term, but from the context or the circumstances of the case. After the time of Tertullian, the mention of infant baptism next occurs in the celebrated school of Alexandria; and there is reason to believe, it commenced there with minors under

age ; and that it descended by degrees to boys, and ultimately to real infants. How vaguely the term *infant* was used in this school, we learn from Clement's work, entitled the Pædagogue. Pædagogy the subject Clement treats of, is defined as not meaning merely the instruction of Christian youth ; but the tuition of Christian men and women, whether learned or ignorant. That all disciples of the truth are children in regard to God, is the leading position he endeavours to establish ; and in illustration of this, various passages of Scripture are quoted, in order to show that grown up men, as well as young persons, are termed children in the sacred writings. He cites for instance, John xiii. 33, ' Little children, yet a little while I am with you,' and by referring to various similar passages shows, that this is a common manner of speaking in Scripture. By adducing also, various diminutive terms used by the sacred writers, such as ' lamb,' ' chicken,' ' infant,' ' babe,' ' suckling,' &c. he illustrates the point which it is his aim to enforce, namely, the simplicity, docility, and littleness in his own eyes, of the true learner in the school of Christ. In Clement's view, Jesus Christ is the chief Pædagogue, and all his followers are *infants* under his nurturing care and tuition. Not only all Christians, but all Christian teachers, and the apostles themselves were learners, who as new born babes, ought by imbibing the unadulterated milk of the word, to grow up from the state of infancy, to the stature of a perfect man in Christ. According to this view, while all Christians are infants, they are such comparatively. As the infancy of Christianity is manhood compared with Judaism ; so a child in Christ is a perfect man compared with a heathen : but the same perfect man was a babe compared with an apostle ; and the chief of the apostles was an infant compared with Christ. Those members in the church at Corinth, whom Paul describes as being carnal, requiring to be ' fed with milk and not

with meat,' Clement terms 'Christian babes:' such babes, he conceives, were merely catechumens; they were wise compared with unconverted Gentiles, but 'carnal' only, compared with those Christians, whom the apostle speaks of as being 'spiritual.' The catechumens in the school at Alexandria, seem to have consisted of babes in Christ, in the lowest sense of the term, as defined by Clement. The state of the catechumen, was intermediate between the world and the church; and such candidates, when considered sufficiently instructed, were baptized, and admitted into full communion. When these circumstances are kept in view, it seems highly probable, that *paidō*—baptism, not only in its etymological signification, but in its primitive use, was the baptism, not of unconscious infants, but of young catechumens, when deemed qualified for admission to all the privileges of the church.

The baptism of infants though not spoken of by Clement, is mentioned by Origen, his pupil, who became a catechist in the school at Alexandria, when eighteen years of age. Some of the expressions usually quoted by pædobaptists, from the Latin translation of Origen's lost works, as evidences in their favour, are generally allowed to be ambiguous or spurious; and his genuine writings in the original Greek, contain no evidence on the subject. But there is evidently little importance to be attached to the testimony of a writer, who entertained such wild and extravagant notions as those taught by this speculative Platonist. As he held the doctrine of the pre-existence of human souls, so he maintained, that 'some souls, before they were born into the world, and before they were united to the body, *had heard*, and *had been taught* of the Father:' and that in baptism, those sins are forgiven, which had been committed in a former state, in the celestial regions!

About forty years after the time of Tertullian, the baptism

of infants is mentioned in unequivocal terms : and it is deserving of notice, that this mention of it occurs in the most ignorant and corrupt part of the Catholic church. The African bishops were distinguished as zealous promoters of nominal religion and clerical authority ; and the dedication of children to God in infancy, readily served their ends, in advancing and confirming the power of the hierarchy. Not less than a tenth of the population of Carthage were reputed Christians in the early part of the third century : and Tertullian, who strongly disapproved of the lax admission of members into the Catholic church, after in vain attempting to check the evil, became so dissatisfied with its corrupt state, that he ultimately separated from it, and joined the Montanists. A practice which previous to his leaving the Catholic church had been adopted, of insisting on candidates being re-examined and re-baptized, unless they produced certificates of baptism from a congregation in connexion with the church at Carthage, was continued by various bishops, for forty years after his time : and we learn, that when Cyprian became bishop, this matter occasioned an open rupture between him and Stephen, bishop of Rome. The quarrel ultimately became very serious : both bishops assembled councils, anathematized each other, and, in short, resorted to every extreme measure, that promised to procure for either the ascendancy ; so that they might be acknowledged pope or dictator to all other bishops.

It was to this Cyprian, an ignorant, headstrong man, who ' loved to have the pre-eminence,' that one Fidus, a rural bishop, wrote in the year 257, wishing to know whether infants might be baptized before they were eight days old. This and one or two other questions were discussed and decided on, at an assembly composed of sixty or seventy bishops, of which Cyprian was the president. In opposition to the querist, who was of opinion that infants ought to be baptized when

eight days old, inasmuch as the law regarding circumcision prescribed this time, the council decided they might be baptized even sooner ; and the chief reasons assigned were, that ‘ God denies grace to none : Jesus came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them ; and *we ought to do all we can* to save our fellow creatures.’ They added, ‘ moreover God would be a respecter of persons, if he denied to infants, what he grants to adults. Did not the prophet Elisha lay upon a child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands ? Now the spiritual sense of this is, that infants are equal to men : but if you refuse to baptize them, you destroy this equality, and are partial.’* Such were the African arguments for infant baptism—arguments, you will perceive, not merely unscriptural, but, for the most part, grossly absurd ; or deriving any little appearance of plausibility they possess, from false analogies or puerile references to Jewish history and Jewish law. Because Elisha, at the command of God, restored a youth to life, new born infants ought to be baptized ! Inasmuch as we ought to do all we can to save our fellow creatures, we ought to give them the grace of baptism, which God denies to none ! It is unnecessary to refer to the other frivolous reasons advanced by this council in support of infant baptism, for you can judge of the character of these African bishops with sufficient accuracy, by the sample adduced ; and their other reasons, if cited, would not be to their advantage. It is obvious, they were men, grossly ignorant of the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom ;—men who hesitated not to act in direct opposition to one of its fundamental principles,—that mankind are *made* Christians, not *born* such ; and who accordingly, by resort-

* The principal part of Cyprian’s letter is cited in the original, by Wall, Vol. I. p. 74.

ing to the old Testament for a rule of duty, changed the original ground of Christian obedience. 'It was Judaism misunderstood,' says Warburton, 'that supported them in their ill-judged schemes. They travestied obscure uncertainties, nay manifest errors into truth; and sought in philosophy and logic, analogies and quibbles to support them. They did not know, that the more perfect dispensation could not take place, till the less perfect, which prefigured it and prepared its way, was set aside and abolished.'*

That little or no importance is to be attached to any practice adopted by these fanatical, ignorant innovators, is freely admitted by the majority of pædobaptist writers. 'It was in these primitive ages,' says Dr. Middleton, 'especially in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, that the chief corruptions of Popery were either actually introduced, or the seeds of them so effectually sown, that they could not fail of producing the fruits, which we now see. By these corruptions I mean, the institution of Monkery; the worship of relics; invocation of saints; prayers for the dead; the superstitious use of images; of the Sacraments; of the sign of the cross; and of consecrated oil.'† 'In the Cyprianic age,' says Mr. Greville Ewing, 'we have all the noble improvements of sponsors, exorcism, consecration of sacramental water, copious pouring, clinical baptism,' &c.; to which, is to be added, the portentous practice of giving infants the Lord's Supper. 'I shall tell you what happened in my own presence,' says Cyprian. 'The parents of a certain little girl, running out of town in a fright, had neglected to take proper care of their child, whom they left in the keeping of a nurse. The nurse had carried her to the magistrates: they, because she was too little to eat the

* Warburton's *Julian*.

† Introductory discourse to *Free Enquiry*, p. 52.

flesh, gave her to eat *before the idol*, some of the bread mixed with wine, which had been left of the sacrifice of those wretches. Some time afterwards, she was taken home by her mother. But she was no more capable of declaring and telling the crime committed, than she had been before of understanding or of hindering it. So it happened, that once when I was administering; her mother, ignorant of what had been done, brought her along with her. But the girl being among the saints, could not with any quietness hear the prayers said; but sometimes fell into weeping, and sometimes into convulsions, with the uneasiness of her mind: and her ignorant soul as under a rack, declared by such tokens as it could, the consciousness of the fact in those tender years. And when the service was ended; and the deacon went to give the cup to those that were present, and the others received it, and her turn came; the girl, by divine instinct, turned away her face, shut her mouth, and refused the cup. But yet the deacon persisted, and put into her mouth, though she refused it, some of the Sacrament of the cup. Then followed reachings and vomiting. The Eucharist could not stay in her polluted mouth and body: the drink consecrated in our Lord's blood, burst out again from her defiled bowels. Such is the power, such is the majesty of our Lord: the secrets of darkness were discovered by its light: even unknown sins could not deceive the priest of God. This happened in the case of an infant, who was, *by reason of her age*, incapable of declaring the crime which another had acted on her.* This circumstance is told by Cyprian, to alarm persons who having apostatized to idolatry during a recent persecution, were, in his view, rejoining the church without due penitence and confession; and I

* *Cyprian Lib. de lapsis.* translated by Wall, History of Baptism, Vol. 11. p. 439.

have, though with much reluctance, cited the offensive narrative, because nothing less than an example of this kind, seemed sufficient to convey an adequate impression of the gross errors in doctrine and practice which prevailed, when the mention of infant baptism first occurs in ecclesiastical history.

Nor was Cyprian and the other African bishops singular in advocating infant communion and similar innovations. Daillé in his celebrated work on the 'right use of the Fathers,' has shown at large, that all the Fathers down to the end of the sixth century, held that the Eucharist ought to be administered to infants—it and baptism being considered both alike necessary to salvation. Thus we find Innocent, who was bishop of Rome, A. D. 417, in a synodical epistle written to the fathers of the Milevitan council, positively stating, that infants cannot be saved without receiving the Lord's Supper :—' that infants,' he says, ' may without the grace of baptism, have eternal life, is very absurd; since, except they eat the flesh of the Son of man, (John vi. 53,) and drink his blood, they have no life in them.' ' His meaning is plainly this,' says Wall, ' they can have no eternal life without receiving the communion; and they cannot receive that, before they are baptized. And it is true what M. Daillé urges, that Augustin says the same thing, eight or ten times, in several places of his books.'

When innovations, such as infant baptism and infant communion were once fairly introduced, it was not the practice of the primitive ages to call their divine obligation in question; but rather to recognize them at once as traditions of the church;—traditions regarded by every one as equally authoritative with Scripture. In the succeeding century, accordingly, we find, as might be anticipated, the baptism of infants repeatedly mentioned; but the character of the leading fathers of this age, though greatly superior to that of Cyprian and the other African bishops, is chargeable with a vice, which attaches serious sus-

picion to any testimony they deliver, whether by word or action. ‘The interests of virtue and true religion,’ says the learned Mosheim, ‘suffered most grievously, by a monstrous error, almost universally adopted in this century, (the fourth) . . . namely, that *it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by that means the interests of the church might be promoted*. This erroneous maxim was now of long standing; it had been adopted for some ages past, and had produced an incredible number of *pious frauds*, to the unspeakable detriment of that glorious cause in which they were employed. And it must be confessed that the greatest men, and most eminent saints of this century, were more or less tainted with the infection of this corrupt principle, as will appear evidently to such as look with an attentive eye into their writings and actions. We would willingly except from this charge Ambrose, and Hilary, Augustin, Gregory Nanzianzen, and Jerome; but truth which is more respectable than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general accusation.’* To the insidious error mentioned—that the end sanctifies the means, which, you will perceive, Mosheim states was then, *of long standing*, having been adopted, and acted on, for ages past, in all matters relating to the church, the numerous innovations that had their origin in the early ages are, doubtless, for the most part to be traced. Infant baptism and infant communion, were probably both viewed as *improvements* called for by the altered circumstances of the church; but their tendency, as well as that of almost every other supposed improvement, was evidently to augment and confirm the dominion of the clergy.

Several of the Fathers, every one will admit, were men of considerable attainments both in learning and piety; but there is reason to think, their writings have, in many quarters, been

* Mosheim, translated by Maclaine, Vol. 1. p. 310.

estimated greatly beyond their real value. To esteem and venerate Christians, who lived so much nearer to the apostolic age than we do, is a natural and very amiable feeling; but this natural prejudice in their favour becomes dangerous, when not controlled by reason and truth. ‘That which I complain of,’ says Jeremy Taylor, ‘is, that we look upon wise men that lived long ago, with so much veneration and mistake, that we reverence them not for having been *wise men*, but, *because they lived long since*.’ It must by all be granted, that of men who considered it justifiable *to deceive and lie*, if the interests of the church could, in their view, by such means be advanced; and who, to use the words of Warburton, in summing up Daillé’s estimation of their character, ‘were absurd interpreters of Scripture, bad reasoners in morals, and very loose evidence in facts,’ the testimony furnished by their writings or their practice, is of little value in the decision of any question of religious doctrine or duty. ‘The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants.’ It is to be remembered, that the earliest of the Fathers are *modern* compared with the apostolic churches which we ought to follow: and that the inspired writings are *the true antiquity* in which alone, confidence is to be placed.

It is common with many advocates of pædobaptism, so soon as they find an instance of infant baptism mentioned by any early writer, immediately to infer, that the practice must have been *universal* throughout the church. But that such a conclusion is drawn too hastily, must be apparent to every attentive reader of ecclesiastical history. We have seen that the practice is mentioned in unambiguous terms in the African church, as early as the middle of the third century; but though it was practised there, thus early, it does not seem to have made its public appearance in the Greek church, till the close of the fourth. And even then, the orations of Gregory

Nazianzen, of Basil, and of others, show, that in that quarter, it was not so much the rule, as the exception. Previous to this period, the usual manner of admission into the church was by the cathecumen state ; and the delay of baptism on the part of catechumens, formed a frequent topic of reproof and remonstrance in the harangues of the clergy. The reluctance so frequently shown by the adherents of national churches in modern times, to receive for the first time the sacrament ;—from its being supposed to bind them to greater strictness of life, had its exact counterpart in the procrastination of catechumens with regard to baptism.

It is in the following terms, that we find Gregory, who was bishop of Constantinople in the year 381, after sharply reprov- ing the delay of baptism on the part of grown up persons, stating his opinion of the propriety of baptizing infants *when in danger of death*. ‘ But, say some, what is your opinion of infants, who are not capable of judging either of the grace of baptism, or of the damage sustained by the want of it ; shall we baptize them too ? By all means, *if there be any apparent danger*. For it were better they were sanctified without their knowing it, than that they should die without being sealed and initiated. *As for others*, I give my opinion, that when they are three years of age, or thereabouts, (for then they are able to hear and answer some of the mystical words, and although they do not fully understand, they may receive impressions) they may be sanctified both soul and body, by the great mystery of initiation.’

It is evident, that Gregory who, it is to be remembered, though his father was a bishop, was not himself baptized till he was thirty years of age, introduces here the baptism of infants in a manner which indicates, that, at that time, it was a point considered by no means settled. *His* opinion on the subject seems to have been, that new-born

babes *ought not* to be baptized, unless there was apparent danger of death ; but because infants might possibly be sanctified without knowing it, the practice was in urgent cases lawful and proper. Where there was no danger of death however, their baptism ought to be deferred till they were three years old, or thereabouts ; and for their being baptized then, this strange and very fanatical reason is assigned :—that at that age, they might receive some impressions, as they were then able to hear and answer some of the mystical words ! What a transition from the intelligent profession of the faith of the gospel, we read of in the apostolic age, (Acts viii. 37,) to this childish mimicry of it, patronized by Gregory ! Even in the preceding catechumen state, which was a serious corruption of the primitive practice, a competent knowledge was deemed requisite in the candidates, prior to their baptism : by this time, however, these instructed catechumens had been reduced by degrees to young children, who, in answer to the questions, ‘Dost thou renounce Satan ?’ ‘Dost thou believe in God the Father,’ &c. ? could articulate two Greek words, signifying, ‘I do renounce,’ ‘I do believe.’ Encouraged by the Emperors, and aided by the first monks, the Greek bishops by enlisting children as professed members of the church, no doubt, considered they were doing good service alike to the state, and to the cause of nominal Christianity. And it is very obvious, that the monks, in procuring subjects so ductile as children to educate for their own purposes, became possessed of proper materials for forming those singular societies, which exerted so powerful an influence over successive generations.

But though these, as well as various other causes, naturally conduced to the rapid extension of infant baptism, the practice does not seem, for a considerable period afterwards, to have been either uniform or universal. In Saxony, during the

eighth century, the general practice, we learn, was to baptize babes within a year old ; this having been enforced by an imperial law : while in Italy, both in that, and the following centuries, the rule seems to have been, the baptism not properly of babes, but of minors by canon law ; which was frequently interpreted, however, by the clergy as applying to young infants. So late as the middle of the tenth century, it appears from the synodical statutes of the Catholic church, that the usual practice at that time was, to baptize minors at Easter and Whitsuntide on their own profession of faith ; and babes at other times when there was apparent danger of death. ‘ It is enacted, that no person shall be baptized unless he can say by heart the Creed and the Lord’s prayer ; but if any Catholics desire the baptism of such as cannot speak, and if they will answer for them, we will not refuse to baptize them.’ The learned Muratori, after adducing a number of facts connected with this point, that occurred in the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, adds, ‘ By these monuments, we may learn, how many centuries Christians retained the custom of not baptizing infants, as we do now, as soon as they are born. Except in case of sickness, *or imminent danger of death*, most deferred it till the Saturdays before Easterday and Whitsunday : on which days, the church solemnly administered baptism. Thither, children several years old were sometimes brought. Bernard, who was Abbot of Cassiano, in the eleventh century, says, ‘ I was three years of age when I was baptized.’ We observe also, ‘ that the baptized immediately received the communion of the body of Christ.’

Every one who has carefully investigated the history of *the nominal* conversion of the northern nations to Christianity, will readily admit, that by the general adoption of a religious practice such as infant baptism, there is not the slightest evi-

dence furnished of its being originally a divine institution. That at the period referred to, and long afterwards, the state of the common people throughout Europe, was extremely depressed and servile, it must be superfluous to mention. Uneducated, and very partially civilized ; possessed of no property, and claiming no rights, their condition differed little from that of slaves. Even the higher ranks were, for the most part, under the acknowledged power of some feudal superior ; while, in spiritual matters, the right of judging and acting for themselves, was asserted by none. To decide what was to be believed and practised, was the exclusive province of the clergy : the sole business of the laity was to listen and obey.*

The practice of baptizing infants, moreover, from its intimate connexion with the universally entertained opinion, that all dying in infancy unbaptized, *were eternally lost*, was evidently, in itself, calculated to become popular, from its power-

* The following extract which forms part of a summary of the religious duty of a layman, given by an old writer, affords a curious, though affecting illustration of the kind of Christianity which prevailed in the middle ages. . . . 'Ye that be lay people, ye shall knowe and understande, that there be ten commandements of our Lord God. The fourth commandement is, thou shalt honour thy fader and thy moder, that is to wit, thy natural fader and thy natural moder, thy god-fader and thy godmoder, thy gostly fader, and thy gostly moder. Thy gostly fader is the Pope, thy bishop, thy curate ; and thy gostly moder is holy churche ; in whom, thou wert regenerate unto gostly life. . . . Furthermore, ye shall knowe and understande, that there be seven sacraments of holy churche : the first is baptye or christendome, which putteth away origynal syn : nowe, all be borne in origynal syn, and cannot be saved by the ordynate laws of God, until the tyme that this origynal syn be put away, and grace gotten unto our soules, which is now done by this sacrament of baptye. This ought not to be administered but by a priest, excepte case of necessitye ; and then, everye man and woman may mynistr it. . . . If such case happe unto any of you, then ye shall saye with good entent on this wyse. 'I christen the, in the name of the Fader, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' And whiles ye be sayeing these words, ye shall caste water upon the chylde, or els put the chylde into the water ; and then, doute ye not, but that childe receiveth sufficiently this sacramente of baptye.' *Stella clericorum*. Wynkyn de Worde, &c. cited by Robinson. Hist. of Bap. p. 296.

fully commending itself to the superstitious cravings of the human heart. How natural it must have been for persons entertaining this opinion, to seek under the influence of parental affection, to ensure the eternal salvation of their dying infants, by means so easy of attainment, is sufficiently obvious. It is hardly conceivable, indeed, that under such circumstances, any could have denied the supposed invaluable privilege to a dying child; especially, when we bear in mind, how assiduously and earnestly their spiritual guides appealed to their hopes and fears on the subject. I may mention in illustration of this, though it is so far back as the fourth century, that we find Augustine challenging, in the most impassioned language, any *who dared to affirm* that infants may be saved without being baptized; and pronouncing the holders of this opinion to be *impious* persons! ‘Carry back from hence,’ that is from the church, he was wont to say, ‘those innocent creatures! The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners!’ To accept his challenge—in other words to maintain, that infants may be saved who die unbaptized, was in this African bishop’s opinion, a stage of audacity and impiety at which, the most hardened of his hearers had not arrived. A superstitious notion respecting the efficacy of baptism in the case of dying infants, it is well known, is still very prevalent; and it cannot be questioned, that the same feelings in which the practice originated, have greatly contributed to its extension and continuance in every succeeding age.* In the un-

* What use has been made by the clergy, in modern times, of this prevailing apprehension respecting the eternal safety of children dying in infancy, may be seen from Wall’s remarks on the passage of Augustine, above cited; which he gives as a practical improvement of the subject. ‘But thou, Christian reader,’ he says, ‘if thou hast children, especially *such as are in danger of death*; and hast that pious concern for their everlasting welfare, and for their obtaining that heavenly purchase of Christ, even *eternal life*, which every good parent ought to

thinking adoption of the practice by the multitude at the present day, as well as in various other religious habits of the community, we have abundant proof, that even in this greatly more enlightened age, ceremonies of this kind are, for the most part, adopted and adhered to *by nations*, not on account of their being regarded as of Scriptural origin and obligation; but in hereditary compliance with custom, or in servile deference to human authority.

I am, &c.

have, depend not on any arrogant dictates of men, that make so bold with God's judgments, as if they themselves were judges'—(judging, namely, that all infants shall, assuredly, be saved,) 'Read that record of God, 1 John v. 11, 12,' 'That God has given to us an eternal life; and that this life is in, or by his Son. He that has the Son (or has an interest in the Son) has this life: He that has not the Son of God, has not life.' No man will, or dare say, Infants shall be excepted in that sentence, which requires they be in Christ, or *have Christ* for their Saviour. Nor can give any good proof, that they shall be excepted in this before us. For which way come they to *belong to Christ*, or *to have him*, but as they are dedicated and entered into his covenant, in the way that he has appointed for all whom he will save, to be entered?' The purport of this exhortation is plainly the same as that of the more declamatory appeal of Augustine; and it is scarcely conceivable that, in either case, any who held the same views of the danger of persons dying in infancy, would hesitate about getting them baptized, when they were so positively assured, that the ceremony secured their eternal salvation.

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have now noticed, I believe, every statement or objection advanced in Mr. ——'s notes; and, in some instances, at much greater length than I at first intended. Some other points also, have been adverted to, at the hazard of being found tedious: but I was unwilling to pass over any topic that might be regarded as furnishing evidence of the slightest importance in favour of the system I was combating. And though you are not to regard these desultory letters as giving a view of the evidence in support of the proposition it has been my object to establish, viz. that immersion into the faith of the gospel, is the bounden and exclusive duty of every Christian believer, with any thing like due fulness or force; enough has been advanced, I trust, to satisfy you, that this position rests securely on the basis of legitimate evidence and conclusive argument; and that the practice of sprinkling or even immersing infants, has no foundation in Scripture.

It would, of course, be incorrect to consider the notes commented on, as designed to give a full view of the arguments usually adduced by pædobaptist writers;—they are evidently indices of arguments, rather than arguments themselves, formally stated and skilfully enforced; and in this light I doubt not, they were regarded by their author; though of course, his positions and arguments, in so far as they are stated, ought to be in every respect, as sound and tenable,

as if they had been amplified and guarded with the most exquisite skill.

Were I aware of any other points being regarded by pædobaptists, as of any importance in their favour, I should readily notice them; for the cause of truth has nothing to fear from a close investigation of the whole compass of legitimate evidence. Nearly every topic, however, usually referred to by writers on the subject, has, I believe, been more or less taken into consideration: and it has been my leading aim throughout, to give proper prominence to those points on which the question hinges; and by which, of course, your judgment of it ought to be determined. Mr. — mentions, that his object in writing his notes was, ‘to preserve the minds of young Christians from being greatly perplexed on the subject;’ and I have no doubt his labours, as well as those of other pædobaptists with this view, are often much needed; for assuredly, *the contradictory grounds* on which infant baptism is by different parties placed, and the *various* and sometimes *opposite benefits* represented by them as conferred by it, must be matters extremely perplexing to every intelligent and reflecting adherent of the system. For you will observe, that while all pædobaptists concur in the conclusion, that infants ought to be baptized, they differ very materially in the premises, from which this conclusion is deduced. There has, in fact, been hardly a single statement advanced by any of them in its support, which has not by others, been pronounced untenable. And in confirmation of this, I may remind you, that some of the most conclusive arguments in the preceding pages, have been quotations from pædobaptist writers.

The most consistent advocates of the practice are obviously those who regard it in its true light, as a tradition of the early church. By such it is assumed, that a discretionary power was conferred on the rulers of the Christian body

subsequent to the apostolic age, to adopt whatever regulations or practices of a beneficial tendency, the new exigencies of the church might seem to require. This is the ground usually taken by Romanists and Episcopalians : and as it is matter of history, that the Fathers, as they are called, exercised this discretionary power, if we hold, they were warranted in assuming the authority in question, it is quite consistent to adopt infant baptism as well as their various other traditions. But Presbyterians and Independents who, though they have adopted this tradition, correctly contend that Christian bishops possessed at no time a right to decree religious rites and ceremonies, are compelled to relinquish the authority thus assumed by the rulers of the church, as a warrant for the practice. They have accordingly invented arguments, with a view to their own justification, derived from entirely new sources. And it is deserving of your notice, that almost every different denomination, has taken up different ground ; and has not unfrequently attempted to rear its own structure on the ruins of some other pædobaptist system. It is owing to this, that we find the writers belonging to these various parties, differing not more from baptists, than they differ from one another. While some found the right of infants to baptism on the apostolic commission, others positively deny that this commission has any reference to infants. A few hold, that pædobaptism is a continuation of the Jewish proselyte baptism ; while others question whether any such baptism was practised prior to the Christian era.* Some maintain that the recorded practice of the apostles in baptizing households, furnishes direct and obvious evidence in favour of the practice ; while by others, it is denied that the cases in question, furnish any evidence whatever in its support. Others again, con-

* See Appendix.

sider it warrantable *to continue* the practice; inasmuch as baptism, in their view, took the place of circumcision, and the ordinance seals to infants the benefits of a covenant made with believers concerning their children, the same in substance with that made with Abraham concerning his posterity. But respecting the benefits accruing to infants from the covenant in question, a great variety of opinion prevails; and, indeed, many do not hesitate to affirm, that no such covenant exists. Some rest the right of infants to baptism, not on their parental connexion at all, but on the engagement of sponsors; while others ground it on the supposed faith of the infant itself, which seems to have been the opinion of Luther, who maintained, ‘that little children ought not to be baptized at all, if it be true, that in baptism they do not believe.’ Now of these various, or opposite grounds, it must, no doubt, to every reflecting pædobaptist, be matter both of difficulty and perplexity, to select satisfactorily the safest and the best!

Then with respect to *the benefits* supposed to be conferred by infant baptism, the views of different pædobaptists, seem not less perplexing than the various grounds on which it is by different denominations defended. By the Roman Catholic and Greek churches, it is considered essential to salvation. By the church of England, it is regarded as conferring spiritual regeneration; so that in baptism, children are ‘made the members of Christ, the children of God, and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.’ This view indeed, is by one section of that church controverted; and the practice is by this party very inconsistently regarded as only admitting infants into the visible church. I need not remind you, that the notion of a person being admitted into the visible church, on the supposition that he will be regenerated at a subsequent period, derives no countenance from the pages of the

new Testament. In other communities, however, baptism is considered as merely sealing to infants the benefits of a covenant of an external nature; and by some, it is maintained, that children are naturally members of the visible church by being born within its pale, so that their baptism is simply an acknowledgment of this; while a few do not hesitate to allege, that it initiates them into the true invisible church, composed of the redeemed. But on the other hand, some do not regard the practice as conferring any benefit at all, but merely as a part of the parent's own profession of Christianity. Here again accordingly, it is natural to suppose, that the inquirer must be greatly perplexed in ascertaining which of these various benefits, infant baptism really confers; or whether, indeed, it confers any benefit whatever!

When you keep in view then, how little pædobaptists are agreed in reference *to the grounds* of their practice; and how little they are agreed in reference *to the benefits* conferred by it, you will admit, I trust, that I was justified in remarking, that they hardly differ more from baptists, than they differ from one another. And if you have looked into many pædobaptists treatises, it will have frequently occurred to you, I doubt not, how common it is for the different parties to preface the defence of their own system, with an unqualified condemnation of that of others. 'What can be more impious, ridiculous, and disgusting,' says one, 'than the manner in which this ordinance (infant baptism) is said to be observed by the church of Rome?' Again—'Who can be surprised at the number of antipædobaptists in the southern part of the island (England) where it is the general system to baptize all children, and, at the same time, to exclude all parents from any part in the matter; where the whole service is a transaction between a priest and certain sureties, called godfathers

and godmothers ?’* In like manner, we find Mr. — complaining of ‘the abuse of this divine ordinance, which prevails to such *an awful extent* in the Episcopal and Romish churches.’ But while he, no doubt, is satisfied that the community to which he belongs, adheres to the true ‘standard,’ we find others bitterly bewailing ‘the mournfully prevalent abuse,’ of the practice, even in the church of Scotland ! ‘The indiscriminate admission to the ordinances of Christ,’ says Dr. Wardlaw, ‘which is involved in *the very idea of a national religion*, has produced, or at least maintained, a very general ignorance or gross misunderstanding of their true nature :— and I would intreat any whose minds may have been startled on the subject of infant baptism by the grievous abuse and prostitution of it, and the various absurd notions entertained respecting it, to consider, that the other ordinance has been equally abused and prostituted ; and that to suffer this, in either case, to shake their convictions and unsettle their practice, is the indication of a weak mind, in which feeling has the ascendancy over judgment, and which is incapable of discriminating between the precepts of God and the corruptions of them by men.’† ‘Many of the most flagrant of these abuses,’ says Mr. Ewing, ‘are little known in Scotland ; and yet baptism is, according to the general system in this country, (i. e. Scotland) dispensed without due regard to the character of the parents. At the same time, it is connected with the imposition of vows on parents, *which are altogether unknown in Scripture*, but which they must either submit to, or forfeit their privilege ; and which it is intended the child shall take upon himself, if he ever desire to be admitted to the Lord’s Supper.’‡

* Ewing on Baptism.

† Wardlaw on Infant Baptism, p. 9.

‡ Ewing’s Essay, p. 11.

But while Independents thus warn us against condemning infant baptism, on account of its prevalent abuse—an abuse ascribable, they think, to that indiscriminate admission to Christian ordinances involved in the very idea of a national church, I am greatly misinformed if they themselves, as a body, adhere to the practice prescribed by the principles they profess, so as to obviate the evils of which they complain. In Scotland, I believe, Independents, for the most part, act in this respect, with commendable consistency; but in England, and America, the cases, so far as my information extends, are very rare, in which the rite is restricted to the infants of professed believers, or to those whose parents make such a credible profession of personal religion as would entitle them to admission into a Christian church. But it cannot be necessary to remind you, that in departing from this ground, they subvert by their own practice, the argument founded on the supposed connexion between *believing* parents and children, which they uniformly represent as being the foundation of their theory.

It is no wonder then, that among such contradictory statements, such glaring inconsistencies, and mutual reproaches, the dispassionate inquirer should feel hesitation and perplexity in deciding, which of all these various denominations has discovered the true ground, on which infant baptism rests. One is apt to expect indeed, that Independents, from their disowning human authority in religion, and professing scriptural views of the nature of Christ's kingdom, must, on this point, be the most enlightened and consistent of any; but on further enquiry it will be discovered, that of all others, *they* are the most inconsistent *both in their views and practice*. For while they profess, that the subjects of Christ's kingdom are distinguished from others, by their 'being born again by the incorruptible seed of the word;' and that this distinction is

shown *by a personal profession* of the faith of the gospel; when they attempt to establish the right of infants to baptism, they strangely disregard this fundamental distinction, and insist that the circumstance of infants being the seed of believers, by marking them as members of the kingdom of heaven, entitles them to the privileges of the Christian church. But if these infants be really members of the kingdom of heaven, it is natural to expect that they who baptize them, will own and take oversight of them as such. What the nature or extent of their membership is, however, it is difficult to ascertain; for Independents themselves seem very undetermined in defining wherein it consists. But whatever it be, every reflecting congregationalist must perceive, that to baptize these infants, and then to leave them in a situation, where they are uncared for by the church—a situation in fact, which is wholly undistinguishable from that of other young persons, is contrary alike to common consistency and common sense. ‘When infants are baptized,’ says a pædobaptist writer, ‘they are solemnly introduced into the family, and are entitled, in a peculiar manner, to the name of God. . . . They are members of the church of Christ, that is of the church general.’* Now, as the ‘church general’ is composed of collective Christian societies, it is evident, that if an infant be admitted into the former, it ought to be recognized as such, by some particular community. Independents, however, refuse to admit the infants they baptize, to the full privileges of the church, until they give credible evidence, when adults, of being regenerated: but their practice in this respect, clearly implies, either that they do not attach any importance to the principle on which they professedly baptize these infants; or that the individuals they solemnly introduce into ‘the kingdom of

* Dwight's Theology, Vol. 5. p. 286.

heaven,' are not qualified for membership in those societies of which this kingdom is composed ;—which is nothing less than a palpable absurdity. What should we think, in temporal matters, of a person being admitted a member of an endowed society, without being admitted to participate of its revenues ? The former case, no less than the latter, is manifestly a contradiction in terms.

When we find an intelligent and pious pædobaptist like Dr. Dwight, candidly acknowledging, ' that he is dissatisfied with his own former views and practices, with respect to persons baptized in infancy ;' and stating, ' that the conduct of those with whom he was in immediate communion, and, so far as he knew them, their opinions also with regard to the subject, were in a greater or less degree erroneous and indefensible ;' while we cannot fail to admire the candour that prompted this avowal, it seems impossible to avoid inferring, that his dissatisfaction with himself and others could have been removed, only by the abandonment of a practice, which as it has no authority from Scripture, is fraught with such numerous difficulties and perplexities to its most enlightened adherents. And surely these difficulties and perplexities, which seem so inseparable from its administration, indicate very unequivocally, that it is a practice which had its origin, not in divine wisdom, but in the ill informed zeal of an innovating age ;—that, in fine, it is a mere unauthorized tradition, which has been allowed to supersede to a lamentable extent, the baptism enjoined by the Founder of our holy faith, to the serious damage of Scriptural Christianity, and the best interests of the human race.

I am, &c.

APPENDIX.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I will add a few remarks on the topic mentioned in my last letter, respecting which you express a desire to receive further information.

The opinion so confidently advanced at one time by various writers, that baptism was in common use among the Jews prior to the Christian era, is now generally relinquished as incapable of proof. This notion seems to have obtained currency chiefly through Maimonides, a Jewish writer, who flourished so late as the twelfth century. The sources whence he derived his information were the Talmudical writings, composed for the use of the Jews, several centuries after the destruction of the temple ; some, it is supposed, in the third century, and others about the beginning of the sixth.

Subsequent to the Babylonish captivity, the Jews were in the practice of speaking of a two-fold law ;—the one *that* contained in Scripture, and the other *that* transmitted by the traditions of the elders. It was in reference to the latter, which had been exalted in our Saviour's time to equal authority with Scripture, that Jesus said, 'Ye make the word of God of none effect by your traditions.' This law was composed of innumerable traditions, which had been handed down, in part, from the time of Ezra ; and having received a further accumulation of materials subsequent to the Christian advent, a large number of these oral sayings was ultimately committed to writing in the early part of the third century. A compilation of them, not merely of the traditions themselves, but of a huge heap of accompanying inferences by a class of men called Mishnical doctors, was made by one Rabbi Judah ; and the whole when completed, consisting of six books, arranged under different heads, was called the *Mishna*. On this book of traditions, various commentaries were written by learned Jews ; and these obtained the name *Gemara*, on account of their being the complement or the filling up of the deficiencies of the Mishna : while both spoken of in conjunction, were termed the *Talmuds*. Of these Talmuds,

there was one completed by the Jews of Judea, about the end of the third century, which is called the Jerusalem Talmud; and another by the Jews of Babylon, about the beginning of the sixth, which is called the Babylonish. Of the latter, Maimonides has given a very skilfully arranged abstract; and by modern Jews, it continues to be consulted, as their chief authority.

Dr. Lightfoot, a leading member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, who made these Jewish writings his particular study, relying on the statements of the Rabbins, ventured to assert, 'that the baptizing of infants was a thing as well known in the church of the Jews, as ever it has been in the Christian church.' And Dr. Hammond, in like manner, was of opinion, 'that the foundation of Christian baptism is far more fitly laid in this practice, than in circumcision;' and that in fact, 'this is the true basis of infant baptism.' Dr. Wall too, who though he admits he was not intimately acquainted with the original authorities, founds his leading argument in favour of pædobaptism, on the same opinion; remarking, however, with his usual candour, that as the Jews seem to have baptized no infants but those of persons proselyted from the heathens, or those bought, found, or taken in war, and, in no case their own infants, they being considered clean by birth; this circumstance has weight against infant baptism, as practised by Christians. By these and other writers, it has been supposed, that as Christian baptism succeeded to the Jewish practice of baptizing proselytes, it was not necessary to specify infants in the apostolic commission; as the apostles would naturally regulate their practice by that of the Jews, in all things not otherwise directed by the Saviour.

On this point you will not expect me to enter at any length; but I doubt not, you will concur in the opinion, that it seems to indicate a great deficiency of Scriptural evidence in support of pædobaptism, that these writers should have been under the necessity of resorting to this Talmudical tradition, to find a 'true basis' for the practice. An argument is necessarily precarious throughout, of which the premises are derived from a dubious source; but the proposition that baptism was practised in initiating proselytes into Judaism, having no other support than the statements of the Mishna and Gemara; that these constitute very unsatisfactory testimony respecting a matter of fact, of a date, centuries anterior to their compilation, is sufficiently obvious. Nor is the character of these Talmudical writers such, as to warrant our placing much reliance on their

traditional sayings. 'From whence was the Talmud sent us,' says Buxtorf in his *Synagoga Judaica*, 'that we should give it so much credit as to believe, that we either ought, or can understand the Mosaic law by the help of it?' 'Much less the gospel,' adds Sir Norton Knatchbull, 'to which the compilers of the Talmud were professed enemies. For the Talmud is called 'a labyrinth of errors, and the foundation of Jewish fables.' 'As for proselyte baptism,' says Dr. Lardner, 'I take it to be a mere fiction of the Rabbins, by whom we have suffered ourselves too often to be imposed upon.' In like manner, we find Le Clerc describing the Rabbins, as men who 'advanced, without any shame, all the foolish whimsies in the world:' while another writer characterizes the Talmud, as 'being full of the most palpable lies; and contrary to all the laws of God, the Scriptures, and the light of nature.' Nor was the credit due to these Talmudical writers, estimated by Dr. Lightfoot himself much more favourably, when he had occasion to judge of their testimony in reference to other questions. 'There are some,' he says, 'who believe the Holy Bible was pointed by the wise men of Tiberias. I do not wonder at the impudence of the Jews who invented the story; but I wonder at the credulity of Christians who applaud it. Recollect, I beseech you, the names of the Rabbins of Tiberias, from the first situation of the University there, to the time that it expired; and what, at length, do you find, but a kind of men, mad with Pharisaism, bewitching with traditions, and bewitched, blind, guileful, doating, they must pardon me if I say, magical and monstrous. Men, how unfit, how unable, how foolish for the undertaking so divine! Read over the Jerusalem Talmud, and see there how R. Jadah, R. Chaninah, &c. and the rest of the grand doctors, among the Rabbins of Tiberias behave themselves; how earnestly they do nothing; how childishly they handle serious matters; how much of sophistry, froth, poison, smoke, nothing at all, there is in their disputes! And if you can believe the Bible was pointed in such a school, believe also all that the Talmudists write.'

Of this Rabbinical rite, it is of importance to observe, no trace whatever is to be found in the new Testament; nor do the statements of the Mishna seem to imply, that it was universally practised: they amount to no more than that it had been adopted by the school of Shammai and the Sadducees. The whole of the presumptive evidence derived from sacred history, is opposed to the supposition that it was practised by the Pharisees. That this powerful sect rejected the baptism of John, though it was generally

received by the Jewish people, we are positively informed; (Luke vii. 29, 30,) and, it is stated by Dr. Gill, that the Christians of our Lord's time, were called by the Jews, by way of contempt, *apostates*, on account of their receiving the doctrine of baptism, and being dipped in Jordan. The title of *the Baptist* given to John, seems of itself to indicate, that the practice of baptizing was not previously in general use; for had this been the case, the designation would not have properly distinguished him from other baptizers. And when Jesus demanded, 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or from men? Answer me:' had it previously been a common practice to baptize proselytes, the immediate answer would no doubt have been, 'It was from men: it was practised by our fathers before John was born.' It is a strong corroboration of this and other presumptive evidence against the prevalence of the rite in new Testament times, that there is no mention of it, (as Dr. Gill informs us) in any of the fathers, for the first three or four centuries, nor in the writings of those who flourished before the Talmuds were compiled. If then, it was ultimately adopted by the Sadducees, it is surely a much more probable supposition, that this sect learnt it from John, (adopting it, it is conceivable, in that spirit of perverseness, which often leads one sect to receive a practice chiefly on account of its being opposed by its rival) than that Christians adopted it from the Jews.

Were it quite certain, however, that this proselyte baptism was as ancient and as general as the reasoning of these pædobaptists requires, that such a practice was founded on divine authority, cannot be shown from the old Testament writings. This fact, you will not fail to perceive, attaches strong suspicion to the argument; and of itself seems fatal to its validity. For if the rite was a mere tradition of the elders, when we bear in mind the severity with which such traditions were commonly reprehended by the Saviour, it appears very improbable that He should have made an unauthorized Jewish usage, the basis of the initiatory ordinance into 'the kingdom of heaven.' That He who could claim 'all power in heaven and on earth,' should, in the exercise of this power, have been recognizing a tradition of the elders, when formally delivering the law of baptism, is a supposition so very incredible, as to demand very explicit proof indeed, in its support. And could the unnatural supposition be substantiated, the transference of this Christian ordinance from the ground of immediate divine appointment, to human tradition, would, assuredly, conduce little to the honour of Christianity.

Independent, however, of considerations of this kind, the material point is, that there exists no adequate evidence of any rite corresponding with Christian baptism, being in use before the time of John. That the purification of proselytes was practised, is admitted; but that the Jews were in the custom of initiating heathen proselytes *by baptism*, has, by various writers who have carefully investigated the subject, both baptist and pædobaptist, been on good grounds questioned. The result of Dr. Benson's enquiries, who, it is proper to mention, examined the subject predisposed in favour of the early prevalence of proselyte baptism, is as follows:—1. Of any person's washing another by way of consecration, purification, or sanctification, except Moses' washing Aaron and his sons, when he set them apart to the office of priests, no instance is to be found. 2. 'I cannot find,' he continues, 'that the Jews do at present practise any such thing as that of baptizing the proselytes that go over to them, though they are said to make them wash themselves.' 3. He asks, 'where is there any intimation of such a practice among the Jews *before* the coming of our Lord? If any could produce any clear testimony of that kind from the old Testament, the Apocrypha, Josephus, or Philo, *that* would be of great moment.' 4. He adds, 'In former times, proselytes coming over from heathenism to the Jewish religion, used to wash themselves; which is a very different thing from *baptism*, or one person's being washed by another. Though I must own, I cannot see how *infants* could wash themselves.*' These results of his careful enquiry, this learned pædobaptist adduces simply as difficulties, which he found it hard to reconcile with the views of Dr. Wall and others; but they would seem to amount to an entire subversion of the theory. For it is to be observed, that if proselyte baptism was a person's dipping himself, and not the immersion of one person by another, it was obviously not baptism in the Christian sense at all; if, moreover, the washing regarded by Dr. Hammond, as the basis of infant baptism, was not practised among the Jews *before* the Christian era,—if there be no indication of it in the old Testament, in the Apocrypha, in Josephus, or in Philo, the traditions of the Rabbins on which the pædobaptist argument is founded, are entitled to little regard.

This view of the evidence seems now generally acquiesced in by the advocates of pædobaptism; for in their more recent publications, the

* Paraphrase and Notes on Paul's Epistles.

subject is seldom introduced; and though Dr. Hammond ventured to rest infant baptism on this Rabbinical tradition, this ground has, by various others, been declared to be wholly untenable. In illustration of this, I shall cite a few sentences from Dr. John Owen, and Dr. Jennings, both of whom seem to have been conversant with these Talmudical writers. From the Israelites washing their clothes before Mount Sinai, says Dr. Owen, 'the Rabbins have formed a baptism for those that enter into their synagogue; a fancy too greedily embraced by some Christian writers, who would have the holy ordinance of the church's baptism to be derived from thence. But this washing of their clothes, not of their bodies, was temporary, never repeated; neither is there any thing of any such baptism or washing required in any proselytes, either men or women, where the laws of their admission are strictly set down. Nor are there the least footsteps of any such usage among the Jews until after the days of John the Baptist, in imitation of whom it was first taken up by some ante-mishnical Rabbins.'* 'It remains to be proved,' says Dr. Jennings, 'not only that Christian baptism was instituted in the room of proselyte baptism, but that the Jews had any such baptism in our Saviour's time. The earliest accounts we have of it are in the Mishna and Gemara. . . . There wants more evidence of its being as ancient as our Saviour's time, than I apprehend can be produced, to ground an argument upon it in relation to infant baptism.'†

The question has more recently been discussed by the reviewer of Heber's Bampton Lectures, in the British Critic for 1817. In opposition to the names of Lightfoot, Hammond, and Wall, this well-informed writer adduces those of Basnage, Shickard, and Wolfius; and after pointing out the irrelevancy of a considerable portion of the evidence usually adduced in support of the antiquity of baptism as an initiatory rite of Judaism, shews that the notion finally rests on the testimony of a passage in the Mishna, which merely specifies a decision of the school of Shammai, relative to the expediency of performing an *ablution* common to mourners and persons defiled by the bones of the dead. 'This constitutes,' he adds, 'the whole of the proof on which we are required to believe baptism an initiatory rite of the Jews!'

The subject has been treated at large by Gill, Gale, and other writers;

* On Hebrews Exer. xix. 35.

† Jewish Antiquities.

but it is not necessary, after the quotations already adduced, to state in detail the result of their enquiries. In concluding his very learned dissertation, (a dissertation considered by writers on the same side, as unanswerable) Dr. Gill postively affirms, 'that the custom of baptizing children, was so far from being common in all ages foregoing the time of John, or of Christ and the apostles, that not a single instance can be given of any one being then baptized:' and adds, in the words of Dr. Owen, 'that the opinion of some learned men, about the transferring of a Jewish baptismal rite which in reality did not then exist) by the Lord Jesus, for the use of his disciples, is destitute of all probability.' It would be easy to quote numerous other testimonies to the same effect; but it may suffice if I add, that in the Appendix to the work entitled, 'Eugenio and Epenetus,' there are references given to the following German writers, as all concurring in regarding Jewish baptism as comparatively a modern practice, introduced much later than the Christian era: Gott. Wernsdorff *Disput. de baptismo mere divino*, 1710.—J. Fechtins in *Coll. Sylog. controvers.* p. 412.—Deylingius *Observat. Miscellan.* tom. iii. p. 253, &c. tom. iv. p. 226, 7. Leips. 1736.—J. Franc. Buddæus *Inst. Theol. dogm.* p. 1436.—J. Gottl. Carpzov. *Antiq. lib.* 1. 47. Frankfort 1748.—C. F. Boernerus *Dissert.* 1729.—J. Christ. Doderlein *Instit. Theol. Christ.* tom. 11. p. 651.—J. A. Ernesti *Oposcula Theolog.* p. 231. Lipsiæ, 1792.

I am, &c.



SUPPLEMENTARY LETTER

ON THE

PERPETUITY OF BAPTISM.



SUPPLEMENTARY LETTER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Since the publication of the preceding letters on the *mode* and *subjects* of baptism, having been repeatedly requested to state also the grounds on which I regard the ordinance as obligatory on Christians in every age; you will allow me, I hope, even after this long interval, to call your attention to a few additional remarks on this latter point. When I formerly addressed you, it did not occur to me, that the existing obligation of the ordinance needed any formal proof; for the duty is so plainly taught in Scripture, that we naturally feel surprised that any should have ever called it in question. In this view I am happy to think you concur; but as the perpetuity of baptism has been practically denied by a few professing Christians, who, on many other points, appear to regard with becoming deference the supreme authority of revelation, you will grant me, I trust, your patient attention, while I take into consideration the leading objections which these persons have advanced to the permanent obligation of this Christian duty.

The proof of baptism's having been instituted as a standing ordinance of the Christian dispensation is so obvious, that the duty, you are aware, was universally recognized by all the churches of which we have any account, for upwards of sixteen centuries. That its recognition should have been thus universal, cannot be matter of surprise to any who consider how expressly it is taught by our Lord and his Apostles. When Jesus issued the command, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;' he spoke as a divine legislator, to whom 'all power in heaven and in earth' was committed. The gospel was to be preached to 'all nations' for 'the obedience of faith;' and the apostles were commanded *to baptize* those whom they made disciples '*into* the name' (for so the words ought to be rendered) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and to teach them 'to observe all things'

Christ had 'commanded.' In the ordinance of baptism, converts were solemnly to profess their confidence in the divine character and will as manifested through Christ—in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as the Creator, the Redeemer, and Sanctifier of his people; and were in this way to enlist and enrol themselves among the followers of Jesus.

It was thus expressly commanded by the Saviour, that *the faith and the obedience* of the gospel should be taught in *immediate* connexion. Our Lord added, 'He that *believeth*, and *is baptized*, shall be saved.' Now baptism having been connected by divine authority with the faith that saves, and the law having been promulgated, without *limitation either to time or to circumstances*, we cannot but infer that 'every creature' who believes the gospel, so long as it continues to be preached, is called on to be baptized. Embodied by the appointment of heaven with that salvation which the gospel reveals, the ordinance must possess a perpetuity common to the dispensation with which it has been incorporated, rendering it obligatory on Christians in every age. Had it been designed for temporary or partial obligation, the will of the divine lawgiver to that effect would no doubt have been expressed; but of any such limitation, not the slightest intimation is to be found. On the contrary, we find the apostles, both in their preaching and in their practice, constantly teaching converts that baptism is a duty of immediate and indispensable obligation on all introduced into the sacred community. We read for example, that the first three thousand persons converted to Christianity, subsequently to the resurrection, were immediately baptized; and we find, moreover, that in every case of remarkable conversion afterwards recorded in the Book of Acts, (with the exception of Sergius Paulus) the baptism of the individual is uniformly mentioned as *immediately* consequent on his reception of the truth. We are thus furnished with evidence alike abundant and decisive, that baptism was instituted by the great Head of the Church, as a standing ordinance of the Christian dispensation; and that it was afterwards enforced by the apostles, as an act of obedience obligatory on every Christian convert.

As matter of divine institution, baptism is to be considered as a *positive* duty; i. e. a duty arising, not from the nature of things, but depending on the declared will of the Lawgiver; and as such, it necessarily continues with all similar laws, for ever obligatory till repealed. There being no foun-

dation, so far as our knowledge extends, for positive laws, save the expressed will of the Institutor, this will is our sole direction, both as to their design and the obedience they require. That the sacred writers, under infallible guidance, have sufficiently made known what our Lord intended should be understood by the law of baptism, both as to its nature and the extent of its obligation, cannot be doubted; for otherwise, we must suppose He commanded a duty, and at the same time failed to make known what it really was. Now, as in the matter of every positive duty, it is the Institutor alone who can declare authoritatively its nature, this authority of itself renders it of imperative obligation. While baptism then, as explained by the apostles, commends itself as every way worthy of Him who instituted it, our obligation to observe it as disciples of Christ, arises not from our understanding all the reasons of its appointment, but from its being the express command of the divine Lawgiver. The observance of any thing, as a part of Christian obedience, without sufficient warrant, is both presumptuous and unlawful; but it cannot be less so to make light of any positive institution of divine appointment.

We are accountable, it is to be remembered, for interpreting the divine law aright, as well as in rendering it that obedience which it demands. If we fail to enquire, with due care and docility of disposition, what the divine will is; or if we harbour in our minds a resolution not to be convinced of the existence of a positive duty against which we entertain a latent prejudice, our ignorance, instead of excusing us, is a principal part of our guilt. As it ought to be our constant care to cherish a real desire to know the divine will in order that we may comply with it, so in every matter of positive institution, as soon as we learn it is commanded, we are bound to obey. For as our obligations to obey all God's commands whatever are absolute and indispensable, commands merely positive, as Bishop Butler has justly remarked, 'admitted to be so from heaven, lay us under a *moral* obligation to obey them—an obligation moral in the strictest and most proper sense.' Baptism then, with every other positive institution, is, from its nature, a law of imperative and perpetual obligation. The declared will of the Supreme, which has commanded its observance, renders the law as permanent as any other of Christ's commands; and it is only while yielding obedience to this, and the other precepts of the Saviour, that his followers can hope for his blessing and presence to the end.

Having been instituted by divine wisdom a standing ordinance to be observed so long as the gospel continues to be preached, by 'every creature' who believes it, we cannot but infer that baptism was designed to answer very important ends. When these ends, as explained by the sacred writers, are duly considered, it seems impossible that its perpetuity should by any be called in question: it is only when persons view it merely as an outward empty rite, and in no respect as a privilege; or when they form partial and inadequate notions of its meaning and design, that they are led to seek for or invent* objections which may serve to countenance them in impugning its permanent obligation.

The arguments advanced by such as dispute its perpetuity seem, for the most part, to proceed on the assumption, that baptism was designed simply

* I have been led to use the above expressions by noticing the *numerous* slender grounds on which the permanent obligation of baptism has, by different parties, been questioned. Besides the argument noticed in the sequel, (as also the views of the Friends, to which no special reference has been made) it has been advanced that Christ, in his commission, did not command the apostles to baptize in water; and that his meaning is to be learnt from the apostle's words, 1 Cor. x. 2. The answer to this is obvious: That the apostles, in the execution of their commission, constantly *baptized converts in water*, is the uniform testimony of sacred history. Were there any room therefore for doubt, which there is not, apostolic practice is an authentic commentary on the Saviour's words.

Again, it has been advanced, that baptism was a religious rite familiar to the Jews; and that the Saviour, in his commission, simply meant that the apostles should *proselyte* mankind to the Christian faith; from which it is inferred that baptism was not expressly commanded, but was merely a compliance with the current practice of the country. On this point enough has already been stated in a preceding letter.† Of any rite corresponding with Christian baptism being in use before the time of John the Baptist, the burden of proof rests with the objector. That no adequate evidence exists of any such practice was formerly shown; and as it is indubitable, that the apostles taught baptism as a *Christian duty*, the attempt, were it successful, to transfer the practice from the ground of immediate divine appointment to human tradition, would necessarily be fatal to the claims of the apostles, as infallible authoritative teachers of the Christian scheme.

It has been further advanced, that 'Paul's thanking God he baptized so very few, is irreconcilable with the supposition, that baptism had been really commanded by the Lord;' but the reason of the apostle's thanking God, assigned by himself, viz. lest any should have said they had been baptized into Paul's name, sufficiently explains his meaning, without resorting to this strained unnatural

† See Appendix, p. p. 220—1.

to mark a transition from some other religion into a profession of the Christian faith. By regarding a portion of the truth as the whole, these persons are led to reduce Scripture evidence to the narrow dimensions of their own limited and very imperfect views. They suppose, that in countries where the profession of Christianity is 'hereditary,' no such transition as baptism was designed to mark, can occur; inasmuch as children derive their Christianity from parents, or others, from earliest infancy; and that as under such circumstances the ordinance cannot be Scripturally observed, it ceases to be obligatory. 'We have been born of parents,' they say, 'who profess the Christian faith; we have been brought up from our infancy in the same profession; and were we to be baptized, we should, according to the import and design of the rite as recorded in Scripture, avow that we had found some other faith than that testified by the apostles, which we previously professed to believe.' According to this view, baptism, you will perceive, was not instituted as a standing ordinance obligatory *on all who become disciples*, but was designed merely for Jewish or heathen converts—

interpretation: and though he states afterwards that God sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, every one knows that according to the Hebrew idiom, his meaning simply is, that baptism compared with preaching, though a part, was a subordinate part of his duty.

But it is maintained further, that even if it be conceded that baptism is commanded in the commission, as it was to the apostles peculiarly, that the commission was delivered, none save they are warranted in acting on it. Now though it is true that the commission was primarily given to the apostles, it is not less certain that its duties were not restricted in the first age to persons possessing the qualifications peculiar to the apostolate; for the apostles, we find, had numerous fellow-labourers, 1 Tim. iii. 1. 8. Titus i. 5. 10.; and as respects baptism more particularly, we learn that Ananias and others performed it, though not filling, so far as we know, any office in the church. It seems to have been usual with Paul to devolve the work of baptizing converts on others. See 1 Cor. i. 14—16. We find Philip too, though not an apostle, converting, baptizing, and teaching; which are the three chief duties enjoined in the commission. See Acts viii.

The apostolic ministry, it is to be remembered, was not instituted for the first age alone; provision was made by it for perpetuating the observance of all things commanded by Christ which the commission embraced. The apostles accordingly committed to writing what they were inspired to teach; and formed Christians into societies who were instructed to 'keep the traditions (or commandments) delivered to them;' and transmit the apostolic writings as the infallible rule of Christian duty to future generations. Now as whatever Christ and his

an ordinance of which missionaries in foreign parts are the proper administrators, and proselytes from Judaism, Mahometanism, or Paganism, the proper subjects.

Now admitting this view to be so far correct, it cannot escape the notice of any careful reader of the New Testament, that it fails to realize the meaning and design of the ordinance, as explained by the inspired writers. By them, we are taught to regard baptism as marking, not merely a transition into the Christian faith, but also as a symbolical ordinance, exhibiting in action what the apostles testified by their living voice, concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the foundation of the convert's hope towards God. In the apostles' view, it was a representation of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Redeemer; and was to the convert, a sign or token of his personal participation in the fruits of Christ's death. While it confirmed his faith in the remission of sins through the blood of Christ, it imported his being dead unto sin and alive unto God : and while enforcing as the sign of regeneration, the duty of walk-

apostles taught, or whatever the first converts practised under their authoritative direction, constitutes an obligation on Christians in every succeeding age, inasmuch as baptism was expressly taught, it must necessarily be a duty of perpetual obligation. As even in the first age, its administration was not restricted to the apostles, to baptize converts must be a duty devolving on Christians in general whenever they are called on to perform it. The particular person who baptizes is matter of small moment, compared with the all important considerations, *by whose authority*, and *with what design* are converts baptized.

Some, in fine, while they admit baptism is an instituted sign of the forgiveness of sins, contend that if we have obtained the thing signified, the observance of the sign is of little consequence. But how presumptuous on every consideration is this ! Has not the form been enjoined by the same authority on which we rely in appropriating the substance ? If we presume to disregard the divine precept, in vain surely do we profess to rely on the divine testimony. We read in sacred history, there were 'certain disciples' at Ephesus, who when asked 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost *since ye believed*,' were on expressing their ignorance of the promise of the Comforter, and on receiving further instruction, 'baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.' These persons are designated by the inspired historian, 'disciples'; but though previously believers, we find them observing the ordinance immediately on learning it was a Christian duty. This, doubtless, will always be the conduct of every true follower of Jesus. For the same authority that has commanded this duty, having commanded every other, he who presumes to dispense with obedience in this instance, betrays a want of allegiance which in principle violates the whole law. James ii. 10.

ing in newness of life, it taught impressively by figure, that as Christ had been raised from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that sleep, in like manner, would all his faithful followers be raised to eternal life.

Why then, it is natural to ask, were the apostles, when guided into all truth, permitted to attach to the ordinance a signification thus *permanently important*, if it was designed merely for *partial* or *temporary* observance? When lessons so unspeakably important are inculcated by baptism, it is surely very unwarrantable for any person to presume that the instruction divine wisdom has thus seen fit to impart, may in their case be dispensed with. Even if its Scriptural signification be unhappily overlooked, or very imperfectly understood, there exist, so far as I can perceive, no just grounds for any claiming exemption from that obedience which every institution of divine appointment imperatively demands. The duty is plainly commanded by the Saviour, and was invariably complied with by the first believers of the gospel: what remains then, but for all in every age, who have an ear to hear Christ's voice, to yield the law implicit obedience?

But according to the theory maintained by those whose views I am combating, it is not the perpetuity of baptism that is controverted, so much as its application to their own supposed changed circumstances. As it does not mark, in their case, that transition from one faith to another, which was part of its original design, it cannot under such circumstances, they think, be Scripturally observed, and ceases to be obligatory. But though it does not continue to mark a transition from Judaism or heathenism to the profession of Christianity, is it not fitted to mark, most impressively, that not less important transition from 'the power of darkness' to 'the kingdom of God's dear Son,' which is common to every person whatever, whether born of Christian parents or otherwise, whose 'heart is opened' to embrace the divine revelation of forgiveness? Scripture recognizes only two classes among mankind, believers and unbelievers; and every person, whether old or young, so long as he neglects or disbelieves the gospel, remains, we are assured, 'a child of wrath,' for 'he that believeth not the Son;' the 'wrath of God abideth on him.' In countries like this, not less than in pagan countries, young persons, whose parents or guardians furnish them with Christian tuition of the best sort, must belong to one or the other of the classes named: if they belong to the former, they ought to be baptized; but so long as they give no proper evidence of per-

sonal religion, we are not warranted in recognizing them as members of the Christian community. All in the apostolic age who were baptized, made a credible profession of the faith—a profession which authorized not only their baptism, but their full reception into the bosom of the church. Now it must be altogether fallacious, you will at once perceive, to confound a satisfactory intelligent profession, such as that which the first disciples made, with the customary ‘hereditary’ profession made by children in general, in countries called Christian. But on no better foundation than this fallacious confounding of things that essentially differ, does the whole of the theory in question rest.

But the reason why some have been led to dispute the continued obligation of baptism, is not, I feel persuaded, the force of any such futile objections as those I have mentioned, or the absence of adequate Scriptural evidence on the point; but the secret though often unperceived influence which certain views of Christian doctrine are allowed to exercise on the mind. That the views of the Christian system to which I refer, contain a great portion of truth, is admitted; but error is usually the most difficult to detect when blended with truth, and sheltered apparently under its protection. We are too apt to study Scripture more with a desire of finding proof of our favourite opinions, than with a real wish to ascertain what has been revealed. If we become attached to a particular theory, and then look into Scripture for confirmations of it, we shall seldom have much difficulty in finding them. Scriptural evidence will be constantly seen through a coloured glass, which will impart to our vision its particular tint whatever part of the inspired testimony we examine. It is surprising how readily we glide over statements irreconcilable with our favourite opinions; and with what eagerness our minds grasp every semblance of evidence we deem favourable to our own views. Thus one who looks upon Jesus Christ as nothing more than man, passes readily over the numerous passages in which he is declared to be Emanuel, God with us;—the image of the invisible God, and as such, the authorized object of Christian adoration; while another in the habit of regarding Christ too exclusively in his divine nature, may be in danger of undervaluing the various passages which teach his humanity. As disciples of Christ, it behoves us sedulously to guard against making selfwilled selections of what we *will* learn; it becomes us to sit with entire docility at His feet, and seek profit from

every truth he has revealed. We ought not only to embrace all the truths he has made known, but to receive and retain them in our minds in their relative importance; for if we attach undue importance to one as compared with others, the result will naturally be, that our minds will overlook or disbelieve a portion of God's revealed will.

No doctrine is more clearly taught in the New Testament, than that of justification by faith; but even this doctrine, important as it confessedly is, may be allowed to occupy too prominent a place in our minds with reference to other truths; for if we dwell exclusively on texts that treat of the method of a sinner's acceptance with God, we may readily form a system under the influence of which it will not be deemed requisite to press the careful performance of moral duties. Not that the doctrine which the apostles teach concerning a sinner's justification by faith, and 'the fruits of the Spirit,' are in the slightest degree at variance, for as faith according to the Christian scheme at once marks the freeness of divine mercy, and is the channel through which that mercy operates on the heart and life, the two truths are indissolubly connected;* yet we may err so widely in estimating their relative importance, that the disproportionate attachment we cherish for the one, will naturally produce similar disproportionate inattention to the other. Some in this way are led habitually to disregard the apostolic injunction that Christians must be '*careful* to maintain good works;' and confidently assume that if Christians take care of their faith, the fruits of faith will, without any care on their part, in due time appear. They suppose that when persons are brought to the knowledge of divine truth every thing of importance is attained;—to 'work out our salvation with fear and trembling' is a duty they seldom if ever see it necessary to enforce. The perfection of the Christian character would seem, in their view, to consist in properly exercising the intellectual faculties, and they attach such exclusive importance to clearness of doctrinal views, that though they recognize baptism as a duty, they regard its observance as little more than an outward form:—a command to be obeyed, but in no sense a privilege to be enjoyed. Others proceed further, and conceiving that baptism is an appendage to faith, not only superfluous, but liable to

* See Acts xv. 9.

Eph. ii. 8. 10.

serious abuse through the self-justifying tendency of the human heart, are led first to overlook its importance as taught by the apostles, and eventually to cherish the desire that reasons may be found sufficient to warrant them in denying its perpetuity.

Every dispassionate inquirer will, I think, allow that any doctrinal system which naturally produces a state of mind in which we almost inevitably become dissatisfied with a portion of revealed truth, is justly liable to suspicion. The system may embrace truths of the last importance; but if it lead its adherents to overlook or undervalue lessons which divine wisdom has seen fit to convey, or what is still worse, to wish for the discovery of reasons to sanction disobedience, it must as a whole be seriously defective and erroneous. But it is not by preconceived notions founded on our own inferences from other doctrines, that baptism in its design and signification ought to be judged of, but by Scripture testimony alone: nor ought we to allow its prevailing abuse to preoccupy our minds to such an extent as to hinder us from conceiving without prejudice of its original and designed use. For though it is quite true, that with all other divine ordinances, it is liable to abuse, we are not warranted on the ground of such liability to depreciate its value—much less to impugn its continued obligation. That when converts are taught to regard its observance as efficacious in itself, it must necessarily foster the spirit of self-justification natural to man, and beget fatal delusion, is admitted; but as He who instituted baptism knew it was thus liable to perversion, our business is simply to comply with the divine will, in the full persuasion that it is only by implicit obedience, on the part of disciples, that the ends which this and the other ordinances of Christianity were designed to serve, can be fully attained. It is probable that in the apostolic age, as well as in every subsequent period, there were those who regarded the form as important irrespective of the substance; but the apostles did not, on account of such perversion, cease to teach it as one of the ‘things which our Lord commanded.’

The first question we ought to ask in considering this and every similar subject is—Has baptism been instituted as a standing ordinance of the Christian dispensation? Without depreciating it on the one hand, or exaggerating its importance on the other, our first duty is to ascertain whether its observance be a part of God’s revealed will. And in proceed-

ing to consider its signification and design, instead of preconceiving of these by *our own inferences from other doctrines*, it seems to be the proper, and much the safest course, to allow our minds to receive from the passages in which baptism is *expressly treated of*, that impression which their natural true interpretation is fitted to produce. Allow me with this view to direct your attention to a few of the leading passages in which the ordinance is mentioned; not so much in the way of proof (for this, after the evidence already adduced, is I trust superfluous) as to illustrate by a few instances the wide difference between the respective places baptism occupies in apostolic teaching, and in those modern systems which lead men to overlook its importance or deny its obligation.

In examining Scripture testimony on the subject, the first passage we naturally refer to is the apostolic commission; but having previously adduced this, I will not dwell on it again, further than to remark, that apart from the important consideration that the Lord Jesus spoke as a divine legislator, when he said '*Go*'—'*baptize* into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' the solemn sanction which Mark adds, '*He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved,*' appears irreconcilable with any other conclusion, than that the ordinance was designed for perpetual and universal obligation. These words were spoken by our Lord when all things in heaven and on earth were committed to him;—when he was about to ascend to the throne of the Majesty on high. 'So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.' Having delivered baptism as one of his parting commands, and solemnly connected it with the faith that saves, the inference seems unavoidable that it was designed for perpetual observance in that kingdom which his apostles were about to establish in the world.

If we interpret our Lord's words in their most obvious sense, as the promulgation of a divine law, the practise of the apostles in invariably enforcing the observance of the ordinance as essential to admission into the church, is readily accounted for; but on any other supposition, their conduct and language in reference to baptism seem quite inexplicable. We find them, for example, in the fulfilment of their commission, constantly teaching baptism as *the first act of obedience*; and this in immediate connexion with the faith of the gospel. As a specimen of their language, it

may suffice to quote the passages that follow: ‘Repent and *be baptized*, every one of you into the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins.*’ ‘Arise and *be baptized*, and *wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of ‘the Lord.’ ‘*Baptism doth now save us*, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.’ Now whatever meaning we attach to these and similar expressions, *their occurrence* must, I think, to every candid inquirer appear on the theory I am combating, wholly unaccountable. Why did the apostles under the guidance of the Spirit persuade converts to be baptized ‘for the remission of sins,’ if the ordinance has no connexion with the pardon of sin and admission into the church? Why do they call it ‘the bath of regeneration,’ and declare that ‘baptism doth now save us,’ if it was a mere temporary unimportant observance not designed for permanent use?

But in what sense, it may be asked, are these and similar expressions to be understood? Are we to conclude that baptism really avails to the remission of sins, in the sense that it is the procuring cause:—or, in other words, that it is efficacious of itself; and under all conceivable circumstances absolutely necessary to salvation? Such notions, I need hardly say, have no warrant in Scripture; and are no doubt much more pernicious than the erroneous theory to which the present strictures more particularly relate. It is *the truth signified by baptism* which alone is the procuring cause of forgiveness; but holding this, we are warranted at the same time, I think, in maintaining, that our Lord having, for infinitely wise purposes, instituted baptism as the door of entrance into his church; if any refuse to observe it, while they consider it part of his revealed will; or if they in any way show a wilful contempt of divine authority in connexion with it, we are bound to refuse recognizing them as his disciples. See John xv. 14. Luke vi. 46. 49.

Further, it appears unaccountable on the supposition that baptism was designed only for partial and temporary use, that the sacred writers should have been led to attach to it a signification so deeply important to converts in every age. We find it for instance frequently representing in the New Testament, that ‘new birth’ without which no man can enter the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord said, ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ It seems very obvious

that to be *born of water* here means to be baptized; as to be *born of the Spirit*, means to be regenerated. As this is the natural unstrained meaning of the words, so we find every writer, during the first fifteen centuries, interpreting them in this sense. *Water* being distinguished from the *Spirit*, we cannot doubt that the water of baptism is meant: to interpret the words, as some since the days of Calvin have done, as signifying only the operation of the Spirit, is to represent our Lord as uttering a feeble tautology—as if he had said ‘Except a man be born of the Spirit and of the Spirit.’ Now as being born of water is connected with being born of the Spirit, and is termed a birth in reference to it, we are taught to regard the ordinance as a representation of the ‘new birth.’ It does not follow there is any virtue in water to secure regeneration independent of the Spirit; but while it is true that we cannot be born of water alone, it is not less clearly revealed that Christ has instituted baptism in order that all converts to the faith should be born of the Spirit and of water also. The same truth is clearly taught by the Apostle Paul: ‘According to his mercy,’ he says (writing to Titus) ‘he hath saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.’ Baptism is here called the *water* or *bath* of regeneration; inasmuch as, in the case of every true convert, the form and the substance are presumed to be connected. Now our Lord having instituted this ordinance as the door of entrance into the church, and as none we are assured can *really* enter into the kingdom of heaven without being ‘born again,’ so it seems plainly to have been designed that none should *visibly* enter without being baptized into his name, ‘for the remission of sins.’ As the followers of the Redeemer are enjoined to restrict religious fellowship to such as they recognize as brethren, baptism was no doubt instituted, among other purposes, to draw a distinct line of demarcation between the church and the world; and in this way serve to preserve Christians in that state of separation from unbelievers, which is essential alike to the communion of saints;—to the faithful exercise of discipline, and the due fulfilment of Christ’s various commands.

But we find baptism taught not merely as the door of entrance into the church and the sign of regeneration, but also as impressively representing that remission or washing away of sins in the blood of Christ, of which every true convert participates. We learn, for example, that at the day of

Pentecost, the Jews who heard Peter were exhorted to ‘repent and be baptized every one of you into the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins.*’ We read afterwards, in the Acts, of an individual being exhorted to ‘arise and be baptized and *wash away his sins.*’ The expressions ‘for the remission of sins,’ ‘wash away thy sins,’ denote that in baptism we are to regard the pardon of sin through the blood of Christ, as realized by every true convert. And here allow me to request you particularly to notice, that it is in reference to a convert, *on his first embracing the truth*, that the original design and true signification of the ordinance can be rightly apprehended. When the duty is delayed, or when owing to particular circumstances, an individual has believed the gospel for a considerable time without seeing it his duty to comply with this part of the Saviour’s will, its full meaning and original design cannot so readily be discerned. In the apostolic age, the blessings of forgiveness and of the participation of the indwelling presence of Christ in his body, the church, were regarded as appropriated by individuals in immediate connexion with their introduction, by baptism, into the sacred community. While the blessings of forgiveness and immediate acceptance with God were freely proclaimed for the reception of all, the subsequent promises of the Christian covenant were made to individuals as forming a part of the one body of Christ, to which, at baptism, they were formerly united. Now as all who believed were immediately baptized, the convert is naturally represented as realizing, in baptism, those blessings of which the ordinance is a figure. The general promise that whosoever believeth shall receive the remission of sins, is regarded in baptism as actually accomplished; for the believer is solemnly assured that all his sins are as really washed away in the blood of Christ, as his body is immersed and washed in the water of baptism.

When we consider that men stand in need of forgiveness as much at the present time as in the apostolic age—that they have sins that need washing away as really as Saul of Tarsus had, it seems very clear that the ordinance must be obligatory on all, in every period, who embrace the divine revelation of forgiveness. As all men, whether born of Christian or of unbelieving parents, are sinners, exposed to the divine displeasure and justly condemned, it must be the duty of every person whatever, so soon as his heart is opened to embrace the truth, to arise and be baptized

and 'wash away his sins.' As an impressive representation of the washing away of guilt—as the token of forgiveness, and as the sign of regeneration, baptism is applicable to converts, whose parents have professed the Christian faith, not less than to proselytes from Paganism or Judaism. We cannot but conclude therefore, that inasmuch as the command is general, no limitation being specified, there is no disciple whatever warranted in regarding himself exempted from the obedience it requires.

Were I to proceed to quote the various passages in which the ordinance is introduced by the sacred writers as representing the death, burial, and resurrection of the Saviour, together with the convert's union and communion with Christ in these events, Rom. vi. 3. 4. Col. ii. 12, 13.; his spiritual conformity to the Redeemer in dying to sin and rising to newness of life, Rom. vi. 2. 6. 8. 2 Cor. v. 14.; and his full conformity to Him in the death of his mortal body, and his resurrection to immortal life. Rom. vi. 1—6. 12. 13. Col. ii. 11—13. 1 Cor. xv. 29—I should transcribe a very considerable portion of the New Testament and extend this letter to an inconvenient length. Enough has been advanced I trust for the purpose in view; namely, to illustrate by a brief reference to Scripture, how irreconcilable with the important signification and use of baptism as taught by the apostles, is the defective system to which I have directed your attention. And I cannot doubt that you will fully concur in the conclusion, that inasmuch as the apostles were led under the infallible guidance of the Spirit to make such constant use of the ordinance, not only as the initiatory ordinance into the church, but also as fraught with lessons of the last importance to believers in every subsequent stage of the Christian life—as designed and fitted to strengthen their faith to excite their love, and advance their conformity to the divine will; it is impossible to resist the inference that a duty expressly enjoined by the Saviour, constantly enforced by the apostles as the first act of Christian obedience; and in its signification and design, of unspeakable importance now as well as at the beginning, must be obligatory on all introduced into the church in every age.

I am, &c.

February, 1840.

THE END.



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